



Acreage Answers

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Spring Spruce-Up

by Doug Stokke, Forest Products Extension Specialist

As temperatures warm and the spring rains come, dirt and mildew on your house and outbuildings can become a real nuisance. Fortunately, cleaning is relatively easy, and a real must if your plans include painting. Paint simply doesn't stick very well to dirt, grease, mold, or mildew.

There are quite a number of commercial siding-cleaning products on the market, available at your local hardware store or home center. For the cost-conscious, however, a simple home-brew solution will neatly do the trick for only pennies: mix 1/3 cup household detergent (liquid dishwashing soap will do fine), 1-2 quarts of 5% sodium hypochlorite (better known as liquid household bleach), and 2-3 quarts of warm water. CAUTION: Never mix bleach with any cleaner or detergent that contains ammonia, as deadly toxic gasses will be generated. Scrub the surface to be cleaned with a bristle brush or sponge, and then rinse with clean water. If you plan to paint let the surface dry thoroughly before you proceed.

Research has shown that paint will last longest on wood-based materials if you first thoroughly scrape off any loose or peeling paint, clean the siding as described above and allow it to dry thoroughly, apply one coat of good-quality oil-based primer, and finish with *two* coats of high-quality latex paint. For an even longer-lasting finish, especially on bare wood, use paintable water repellent or water repellent preservative prior to applying the primer. This multi-step process takes time, but if followed, this procedure can result in paint that can last for up to ten years. For more information on painting exterior surfaces, request extension publications Pm-362, *Finishing Exterior Wood Surfaces* and Pm-363, *Paint Problems on Exterior Wood*. Or, visit our website at

<http://www.forestry.iastate.edu/ext/product.html>



Let the Hunt Begin!

by Mike White, ISU Extension Crops Specialist

Please share *Acreage Answers* with your acreage neighbors. Call your local ISU Extension office to be placed on the mailing list for *Acreage Answers* and to give us suggestions for future articles.

**Central Iowa
Extension offices**

Boone Co.	515-432-3882
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Dallas Co.	515-993-4281
Green Co.	515-386-2138
Guthrie Co.	641-747-2276
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Madison Co.	515-462-1001
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Polk Co.	515-261-4202
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www.extension.iastate.edu/polk/ag/newsletters

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Cooperative Extension Service, Iowa State University of Science and Technology, and the United States Department of Agriculture cooperating.

April is now here, and so are morel mushrooms. Iowa mushroom hunters will soon head to the woods with their bags in search of tasty morels, also commonly known as sponge mushrooms. Morels have a distinctive sponge-like appearance and most people collect them with confidence. Still, some are toxic and you need to be careful!

Anyone gathering and eating any natural food must exercise care. Morel hunters need to be particularly careful. There are several other mushroom-like fungi that look similar to a morel but are not good to eat and can be poisonous. The inexperienced mushroom hunter may need some help in identifying these non-edible mushrooms. Even the experienced mushroom hunter may be interested in knowing what those other mushroom-like fungi are and if they are edible.

Morel hunters need to remember mushrooms can "spoil" in the same way that any fresh high protein food will, especially if left unrefrigerated in plastic bags. Mushrooms should not be gathered in plastic sacks. It is best to wrap each specimen in paper toweling or wax paper until it can be cleaned. Mushrooms should be refrigerated if they are to be kept overnight.

Your local Extension office has three excellent publications available to help identify the edible mushrooms. *Morels, False Morels, and Other Cup Fungi* (PM 1204) is a 24 page color publication (cost \$1.50). *Iowa's Mushrooms and Nonflowering Plants* is a 22 page black and white publication with sketches of different mushroom fungi (cost \$1.00). *Mushrooms and other Related Fungi* is a 16 page color publication (cost \$1.50).

Rules for mushroom hunters--

1. Use a good mushroom book and identify each mushroom carefully. Know the mushrooms you eat. Do not eat a mushroom that you cannot identify.
2. Do not eat *Amanita* species.
3. When eating a mushroom species new to you, eat only a small amount.
4. Do not eat too much. Some mushrooms can be eaten in smaller quantities but in larger amounts may cause severe reactions.
5. Consider possible allergic reactions. In these cases, mushrooms may sensitize a person and the next meal may result in serious problems.



Tractors are the Cause

by Charles V. Schwabb, ISU Extension Safety Specialist



Tractors are common to all farm operations

even small acreage farms. They also are the major cause of death in agriculture today. Tractors are linked to more than half of farm-related deaths, both nationally and in Iowa. The National Safety Council estimates that 317 people were killed in 1998 while operating a tractor. About 52 percent of those deaths were the result of a tractor rollover.

This high death rate associated with tractors is not a new problem. Since 1970, tractors have been the leading cause of farm operator deaths, according to the National Safety Council. The cumulative death toll from tractor accidents is staggering.

Why should a small acreage farm owner worry about tractor fatalities? The reason is simple, the majority of tractors that are involved in these numerous fatalities are the small and mid-range size tractors that you would find on your farm. These tractors are also the ones without the rollover protective structure, ROPS.

Tractors made more than 40 years ago without advances in safety technology are operational today and located on small farms. It is estimated that less than one-third of the 4.4 million tractors used for agricultural purposes have ROPS. Older

tractors often are used in situations typically associated with tractor rollover fatalities, such as mowing the road ditch area, using a front-end loader, and hauling fallen trees.

ROPS, or rollover protective structure, is a cab or frame that provides a safe environment for the tractor operator in the event of a rollover. Also called anti-roll bars or ROPS cabs, all are designed to prevent death and minimize injury.

ROPS affords some safety during tractor overturns, but operators need more protection. All operators of tractors equipped with ROPS must wear seat belts.

Without a seat belt, the operator will not be confined to the protective zone.

During an overturn, the operator of a tractor with ROPS could be thrown from the protected area and crushed by the tractor, or even the rollover protective structure itself, if the operator is not wearing a seat belt.

There are several ways to reduce the possibility of tractor rollovers. However, these safety practices are not a substitute for ROPS. Follow these tips, and use seat belts on tractors equipped with ROPS, to keep safe.

- Avoid sharp turns and reduce speed when turning.
- Avoid driving on steep embankments, near

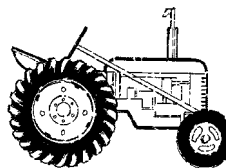
ditches, and around holes.

- Hitch only to a drawbar.

Older tractors can be retrofitted with rollover protective structures. Check with your local dealer or Extension office.

Extension staff has access to a book compiled by the Marshfield Clinic that lists manufacturers, models, and approximate costs of obtaining retrofit ROPS for tractors. Retrofitting can pose a difficult decision because its cost for an older tractor can exceed the machine's actual value.

However, the true cost is in the lives that could be saved.



What Would You Do?

by Charles Schwab, Laura Miller, and Lynn Graham

What Would You Do? presents an engaging way for parents to talk to their children about farm dangers. This book includes illustrations of 24 real-life scenarios, each showing a different type of hazard and asks the question, "What would you do?" This book is designed for children four to eight years old, an age when children are beginning to explore their surroundings on their own.

The book cost \$6.75 and is available through your local Extension office.

Vegetable Gardening

by Mohamad Khan, ISU Extension Urban Horticulture Specialist

Almost everyone is ready to be outside planting something by now! Here are a few tips to make your gardening successful.

Tillage

When possible, fall is the best time to plow or spade the garden soil. This helps control certain insects and diseases. When breaking ground in the spring, the soil should never be worked when too wet. If worked under wet conditions, the soil will become hard and restrict root growth. If a handful of soil formed into a ball crumbles when pressed with the thumb it is ready for plowing or spading. If the ball of soil retains its shape, delay soil tillage until the water content diminishes.

Organic Matter

A good garden soil should be high in organic matter. Soil organic matter, or humus, is the dark brown to black substance in the surface layer of soil made up of organic compounds resulting from decomposition of vegetative and animal matter. Manure and compost are examples of organic matter. Remember that commercial fertilizers are not a substitute for organic matter--both are needed for fertile, productive garden soil.

Soil pH

Soil pH, a measure of soil acidity, is important in maintaining a supply of calcium and minor elements. A soil pH of

7.0 is neutral, while a pH above 7.1 is alkaline or basic. Most vegetables grow best on a slightly acid soil in the range of pH 6.0 to 6.8.

Planting

Make sure that you plant only cool season crops such as potatoes, onions, and peas the first half of April. When planting potatoes choose seed pieces that are certified and treated. Cut your potatoes several days to a week ahead of time and treat with a fungicide. Each piece should have at least two good eyes or buds. Plant the pieces in loose soil just below the surface and mound loose soil over it as the plant begins to grow.

By mid-April cole crops such as cabbage, cauliflower, and broccoli can be planted as well as other cool season crops like lettuce, carrots, and beets.

Your local Extension office has a variety of publications available to help you with your gardening. A partial list includes the following titles: *Planting & Harvesting Time for Garden Vegetables* (PM 534); *Suggested Vegetable Varieties for the Home Garden* (PM 607); *How to Plant Tomatoes* (PM 608); *Planting a Home Vegetable Garden* (PM 819); *Starting Garden Transplants at Home* (PM 874); and *Weed Management in the Home Garden* (PM 719).



Controlling Your Crabgrass

from Horticulture & Home Pest News

One of the keys to successful control of crabgrass in lawns is correct timing of the pre-emergence herbicide application. Preemergence herbicides must be applied before the crabgrass germinates. If the material is applied too early, the crabgrass that germinates late in the season will not be controlled. If applied too late, some crabgrass will have already germinated.

Preemergence herbicides should normally be applied in early to mid-April in southern Iowa, mid-April to May 1 in central Iowa, and late April to early May in northern areas of the state. Weather often varies considerably from year to year in Iowa. Accordingly, gardeners should make adjustments in the timing of the preemergence herbicide application. If the weather in March and April is consistently warmer than normal, apply the preemergence herbicide early in the normal time period. Apply the herbicide late in the recommended time period if Iowa is experiencing a cold early spring.

If you're still uncertain as to when to apply the preemergence herbicide, Mother Nature does supply some helpful clues. Crabgrass seed germination usually coincides with the time forsythia blossoms start dropping or when redbud trees reach full bloom.

Can I Burn Now?

Last summer and fall saw most central Iowa counties instituting burning bans. Cleaning-up your acreage in the spring usually involves burning.

So, can you burn now? If you aren't sure, call your fire chief. If you aren't sure who provides fire protection for your acreage, call the county sheriff's office.

If you are considering a large burn that will be seen for miles, it is a good idea to call your local fire chief and let them know your intentions. If they receive calls from your neighbors, they will be aware of what you are doing.

Some things to remember when burning: Will the smoke blow across the road and be a traffic hazard? Do I have the time to stay and monitor the fire until it is out? How close is the fire to a field or other buildings that could ignite when the wind direction changes?

For more information on open burning, call or email Clark Ott (Iowa Department of Natural Resources) at 515-381-4899 or COtt@max.state.ia.us, and ask for *Open Burning Rules*.

(Information for this article was provided by Barry Halling, Emergency Management Director for Dallas County.)

Wildlife Damage to Trees and Shrubs

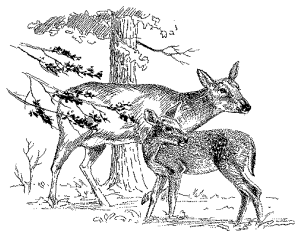
from Horticulture & Home Pest News

This season's cold, snowy winter has been difficult for plants, wildlife, and humans. Extensive damage to landscape plants has been observed across the entire state.

Wildlife Damage

Symptoms: The deep snow and extended period of snowcover have posed serious problems for wildlife in the state. Denied access to food on the ground, rabbits and deer have been forced to feed on unprotected trees and shrubs in windbreaks, home orchards, and landscape plantings.

Rabbits have gnawed off the bark on many young, thin-barked, deciduous trees. On many trees, the bark has been removed completely around the trunk, effectively girdling them. Rabbits also have fed on deciduous shrubs. They have debarked large stems and snapped off small twigs. Rabbits have stripped off the foliage on the bottom portion of large evergreens, while smaller evergreens have had their tops gnawed off.



Deer have been another threat to trees and shrubs in the state. In some cases the green growth on evergreens has been stripped off as high as the animals could reach.

Wrapping the trunk or applying pruning paint to the damaged area will not save the tree. Most affected trees will sucker from the base. However, since most fruit and ornamental trees are propagated by grafting, suckers which originate from the rootstock will not produce a desirable tree.

Many deciduous shrubs have the ability to produce new shoots or suckers at their base. Because of this ability, many severely damaged deciduous shrubs will eventually recover. (It may take some shrubs several years to fully recover.) Girdled stems should be cut off just below the feeding injury.

The key to the condition of damaged evergreens is the presence of growing points or buds on the injured branches. Branches that have had all their buds devoured by hungry animals will not produce new growth this spring. As a result, some small evergreens may have been completely destroyed. Larger evergreens may have permanently lost their lower branches. Since buds on arborvitae and junipers are difficult to see, individuals may want to wait until spring before taking any action. Branches that don't produce new growth by mid-June have been destroyed and can be removed.