Bamboo: A Love Story

Jon Traunfeld, Extension Specialist, Fruits and Vegetables, and State Master Gardener Coordinator

When we moved into our home some years ago we inherited a substantial rear border of bamboo— the “running” type that reaches 30 ft. in height. Although it made an impressive screen I was leery. I knew from work experience that controlling bamboo in a residential landscape is a challenge. No one in their right mind would plant it so why would I want to keep it. Well, because my wife took a strong and immediate liking to it. Wife to me: “Why would we want to spend the time and money to remove a living screen that is functional and beautiful?” I relented to save our marriage, but we have sparred many times over the bamboo. Since I am the one who has cut and hauled the dead, crowded, and leaning culms (bamboo stalks), and kicked over and mowed the large crop of succulent shoots that emerged each year in the adjacent lawn and beds, I can tell you with 100% certainty- it’s a lot of work. I will also admit to developing a fondness for this unique and graceful feature of our landscape, and respect for its amazing biomass and strength (I have given thousands of pieces to community gardeners for fencing and trellises).

My goal for this monster plant has always been peaceful containment. I got my chance two years ago when a contractor was on site shoring up a foundation wall. I had them dig a trench with an excavator around the perimeter of my bamboo patch that was 18 in. wide, 140 ft. long and 3 ft. deep. (The back of the patch is bordered by a neighbor’s asphalt driveway.) Now what material to use for the barrier? Some people have tried pouring concrete or inserting flashing or corrugated metal. After checking...
with a number of references I decided to buy a roll of “Rhizome Barrier”, made from high density polyethylene 60 mils thick (.060 in). There are a number of companies online that sell supplies for growing and containing bamboo. I unrolled it, stood it along the trench wall and backfilled. This also was a lot of work (and expense at $1.50/linear ft.) but worth it.

What about those massive rhizomes that had grown to 30 ft. in length underground? The excavator ripped through them, leaving a network of rhizomes under my lawn that were now cut off from the mother plants. I had many fewer shoots emerge outside the barrier in 2011 and this year only a few emerged from the nearly depleted rhizomes. Our bamboo has never looked better which has helped me be more appreciative, and less resentful, of this unusual plant.

**Tips on Post-Bloom Care of Spring Bulbs**

*Ray Bosmans, Professor Emeritus, University of Maryland*

Every year the HGIC receives many calls from homeowners asking how to properly care for their spring-flowering bulbs after they have bloomed and the foliage remains. Many gardeners feel that the foliage left behind after flowering is unattractive and gets in the way of planting annual flowers. Gardeners often remove the foliage too soon — while it is still green. The foliage is very important for bulb nourishment, therefore, always leave the foliage intact until it dies down on its own. Also, avoid tying or folding-over the green leaves since this might interfere with the movement of water and nutrients from the leaves to the bulb. Don’t panic if you have already cut off green foliage this year, but avoid doing it in the future.

If your bulbs are not growing very strong you can fertilize now to increase bulb vigor for next year. Apply 10-10-10 granular fertilizer at a rate of 1 lb. per 100 sq. feet. Narcissus bulbs will last for many years and multiply. Most tulips, however, have a limited life span of only a few years of bloom. Most horticulturalists consider tulips as annuals replacing them with fresh new ones each fall. Some tulips such as the smaller ‘species’ type are truly perennials and do not need to be replaced each year.
Every time we turn around it seems like there is a new insect pest attacking our plants and trees, or invading our homes! This summer is no exception – Japanese cedar longhorned beetle, kudzu bug, and daylily leaf miner are among the newest invasive species to watch out for in Maryland.

**Japanese Cedar Longhorned Beetle**

This beetle has been in New England, North Carolina, and the west coast for some time. It was found in Maryland in 2011 and is currently in northern Harford county and Elkridge in Howard county. It is a relatively small longhorned beetle (~3/8in). Females are reddish brown and males are black with reddish “shoulders.” Adults emerge mid-April through May. Hosts include Arborvitae, Cryptomeria, False cypress, Leyland Cypress, and eastern redcedar (North Carolina). Other listed hosts include Chamaecyparis, Thujopsis, Juniper, Monterey cypress, firs, and pine. Damage appears as dead branches as small as a pencil to main trunks. The damage resembles winter dieback so look carefully for oval exit holes about 4mm x 2mm. Peel back bark and look for tunnels. If you see this insect, please telephone our center 800-342-2507 (Maryland residents only) or send photos to us via our web site. For additional information download this pest alert from USDA, APHIS - Japanese Cedar Longhorned Beetle in the Eastern United States and view this YouTube video. There is no control listed for this pest other than to destroy infested plant material. Be sure to check with us first before you do anything.

**Megacopta cribraria**, called the kudzu bug, bean plataspid, lablab bug, or globular stinkbug is a potential pest of soybeans. It is about the size of a pea. It is currently found in Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina. While most of our readers are not growing soy beans, this pest (like the brown marmorated stink bug, boxelder bug and Asian lady beetle) has a habit of entering homes in the fall to spend the winter. Keep an eye out for this pest and report sightings immediately to the Maryland Department of Agriculture at 410-841-5920 or via the Home and Garden Information Center Center’s toll-free number: 800-342-2507 or via the “Send a Question” form on the HGIC web site. To learn more, watch this excellent YouTube video from the University of Georgia.
Daylily Leaf Miner Gaye Williams (MDA entomologist), has confirmed the identity of a daylily leaf miner which has been observed in 11 states including Maryland. It’s *Ophiomyia kwansonis* Sasakawa, a Japanese/Taiwanese fly. See NPDN’s First Detector Network News (page 7) for a report by Gaye Williams and Gary Steck from the Florida Dept of Agriculture. This pest is practically impossible to eradicate, and the pale larvae hard to find. It is common in wild stands of the roadside lily (*Hemerocallis fulva*). There are at least two generations in Maryland. The pest does not kill the plant, but renders the leaves unsightly due to numerous elongate mines. Remove and destroy any infested leaves.

The Japanese Beetle

Ray Bosmans, Professor Emeritus, University of Maryland

The Japanese Beetle was one of the first “exotic invasives” to enter our country many years ago. Today it is found over most of the Eastern United States. The beetles first became a serious problem in the 1930’s when millions of them destroyed vegetables, fruits, and many landscape plants, including turf. Over the years an arsenal of traps and insecticides have been developed to help combat them.

The Japanese beetle is an attractive beetle with an iridescent green and brown body. The beetles congregate by the hundreds to eat the foliage, flowers, or fruit on a wide variety of plants. Early July is when most gardeners see them feeding, however you might see them earlier this year because of the early spring.

Most of the beetle’s life is spent as a “grub” living in the soil feeding on grass roots. They live approximately three years underground and as a grub can cause serious feeding damage to blue fescue and creeping red fescue lawns. The tall fescue grasses are not bothered by them. The population density of Japanese Beetles varies throughout its range. Since Japanese beetles seek out sunny turf to lay their eggs, new housing developments are often prime locations for them. Older well established neighborhoods with large trees and more shade are not as attractive for egg laying. As residential landscapes become more diversified and mature, there are more beneficial insects established which help reduce the population of Japanese beetles. Sometimes summer’s hot dry weather, while not good for our plants, actually hinders the egg hatching and grub development of the Japanese beetle.

For light infestations of adult beetles, hand pick beetles and drop them into soapy water. For heavy infestations, spray the affected plants with a labeled insecticide. If using traps, follow the instructions...don’t place them near the plants that you are trying to protect.
Southern Blight

During a typical hot humid Maryland summer many homeowners will call the Center with dieback symptoms on their bedding plants. The symptoms range from wilting to collapse and browning to rapid death. The symptoms they describe easily fit the disease called Southern blight caused by the fungus *Sclerotium rolfsii*. This fungus can attack almost all bedding plants as well as many vegetables such as tomatoes, peppers, and carrots in the garden.

It is active only during hot weather, so plants can grow well in infested soil during most of the growing season, and only become damaged during the hottest part of the summer. The first symptoms seen are wilting and collapse of individual stems or entire plants. Unlike several other wilt diseases the leaves will initially remain green and will hang on the plant. Close inspection of the stem at the soil line reveals white mycelium (strands of fungus growing on the stem and mulch or soil surface), and small (1/8 to 1/16 inch), tan spherical sclerotia, that resemble mustard seeds (They are white when first formed, and turn brown gradually over several days). Roots of infected plants are unaffected. Cortical decay of the stem at the soil line is common during hot, humid weather. Vegetable fruits such as tomatoes, watermelons, and canteloupes can be infected and will develop a soft mushy rot if they are in contact with the soil.

The Southern Blight fungus prefers warm wet summer weather with ideal temperatures in the range of 80-95 degrees. Excessive mulch around the base of bedding plants or black plastic mulch placed tightly against vegetable stems will also favor disease because of extra heat and moisture retention.

Management:
The cornerstone for control of all blight diseases is sanitation both during the growing season and in the fall. Wilted and blighted plants and plant parts should be promptly removed from the garden. Do not compost material killed by southern blight because the sclerotia of these fungi may survive composting. In the fall, all plant debris should routinely be cut at ground level and removed.

The most promising research results for least toxic disease management is soil incorporation of antagonistic biological control organisms such as *Trichoderma* species. There is also evidence that incorporating compost will also help reduce disease incidence.
Delmarva residents don’t have to worry much about attacks from lions, tigers, and bears while working and playing outdoors, but there are still some very serious threats to our health. By many standards, the most common of these is Lyme disease. In 2009 and 2010, Delaware had the highest rate of confirmed Lyme disease cases in the country, according to the Centers for Disease Control. Maryland and Virginia were also in the top 14. Research has shown that its prevalence rises and falls to some extent according to natural cycles, but we as humans also have to take some blame for its prevalence.

According to a New York Times article on December 2, 2011, the boom and bust cycle in acorn production over the past two years will likely result in a very high incidence of Lyme Disease in areas with lots of oak trees in 2012. Richard S. Ostfeld, a disease ecologist at the Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies in Millbrook, N.Y., said, “We expect 2012 to be the worst year for Lyme disease risk ever.”

Bumper crops of acorns, like the one we saw in 2010, provide a huge source of food for many mammal species, including the field mouse. This surplus in food led to a population explosion in field mice in the summer of 2011. Because the 2011 acorn crop was very small and unable to support the bigger population, field mouse numbers are expected to crash this year.

This food boom and bust cycle trickles down to other species, like deer ticks—also known as blacklegged ticks or bear ticks. Just as more acorns mean more mice, more mice mean more ticks. When the mouse population crashes, ticks will be in search of other sources of a blood meal, including humans. The number of tick bites on humans is therefore expected to increase, and the percentage of ticks infected with the Lyme disease bacteria is expected to be higher, leading to an overall increase in human cases of the disease.

One of the ways that humans help the disease thrive is through the spread of invasive species like Japanese barberry and bush—or Amur—honesuckle. These plants create the perfect habitat for both ticks and their hosts by creating a thick layer of cool and moist undergrowth. Studies have shown that tick populations are 67% higher in barberry-infested areas, and that there are three times as many ticks infected with the Lyme disease bacteria than in areas with no barberry. Another study showed that areas in Missouri infested with bush honeysuckle had 10 times the number of ticks infected with another human disease, Ehrlichia.

What does this mean to you? Be sure to take extra precautions when working or playing outside this year. Regularly apply insect repellent containing DEET or treat your clothes with permethrin, wear light-colored clothes so that ticks are more easily spotted, and tuck your pants into your socks. Do a careful tick check after going inside.

Remove embedded ticks with tweezers by pulling slowly and steadily away from the skin without twisting. The Lyme disease bacteria can take up to 48 hours to transmit after embedment, and in Delmarva is only carried by the deer tick. The bull’s eye rash is a reliable symptom of infection, but it only appears in 70-80% of Lyme disease cases. Other symptoms are fatigue, chills, fever, headache, body aches, and swollen lymph nodes. As the disease progresses, symptoms like facial palsy, meningitis, joint swelling, shooting pains, and change in heartbeat may develop.

Untreated cases of the disease can cause long-term arthritis and neurological problems, so early treatment is essential if infection is suspected. Treatment includes a course of antibiotics, although there is some controversy about the duration of treatment needed for effective elimination of the bacteria.

Lyme disease is the most common tick-borne disease in Delmarva, but there are many others. Delmarva is a hotspot for Rocky Mountain spotted fever, which is carried by dog ticks and usually results in red spots on hands and feet. It can be fatal if not treated.

There are some options for controlling ticks on a small scale. Several acaricide products are available to homeowners for application to turf and ornamentals in either liquid or granular form. These products kill a wide range of insects, including beneficial species. A natural fungus-based pesticide called Tick-Ex that targets tick species was recently registered by the Environmental Protection Agency and should be available commercially in 2014.

This article was previously printed in the Delmarva Farmer and UME’s Branching Out newsletter. Branching Out is published four times per year and distributed to forest landowners, resource professionals, and others interested in forest stewardship. Visit the Forest Stewardship Education web page for subscription information.
Dividing Iris

The very beautiful bearded (a.k.a. German) iris is one of the finest of the very showy perennials widely grown in our region. Their exquisite blossoms earned them the title as “the poor man’s orchid”. Their blossoms come in almost every color you can imagine. There is one very destructive insect pest threat….the iris borer and a bacterial soft rot of the rhizomes that accompanies a borer problem. It can cause substantial destruction to the rhizomes and quickly destroy large sections of iris. This pest is typically attracted to older, over-crowded gardens.

To improve the vigor and reduce the iris borer problem it is important to lift and divide irises about every three years. The recommended time for our region is June through July. Begin by lifting the plants from the ground with a spading fork (photo 1), then remove the soil from the roots and inspect the rhizomes for any signs of rot or borers (photo 2). Discard very old and unhealthy rhizomes (photo 3). Cut the rhizomes with a knife to an approximate length of a few inches. Allow the freshly cut surface of the rhizome to “suberize”. This is the beginning of the healing process and is done by letting the plants stay in the sun for a day or two. Trim the foliage back to about 5 inches and shorten the roots if needed. (photo 4) Replant the newly divided rhizomes in a sunny well-drained soil. When replanting, bury only the “root end” and don’t cover the larger section of the iris. Don’t cover the rhizomes with mulch. Iris do best when the rhizome is exposed to the heat of the sun. After a few weeks the plants will recover from transplanting and resume new growth.
The Year of Leafy Greens

It’s official – ‘Leafy Greens’ is Grow It Eat It’s vegetable gardening theme for 2012. We hope that yearly vegetable themes will help inspire you to grow new food crops. A variety of ‘Leafy Greens’ seeds were distributed to GIEI teams so they could showcase and educate with them in demonstration gardens around the state. Contact your local Master Gardener office for locations.

Many gardeners might think that greens can only be successfully grown in the cooler seasons of the year. But many types of greens are grown in warmer climates and will produce well in Maryland. Check out the ‘Leafy Greens’ section of our website to view greens for both cool and warm season production.

Malabar spinach, Swiss chard, and sweet potato foliage are a few examples of leafy greens suited for the warm season vegetable garden.

Leafy Greens can be grown not only in the ground but in containers. Maryland Salad tables™ and Salad Boxes™ are a great way to grow greens if you have limited space. Think outside the box...but in this case inside the box works perfectly!

We are collecting photos, videos, and recipes throughout the season and will post them on the Leafy Greens section of the GIEI website so visit often.

Many of the Grow It Eat It blog post topics are about leafy greens and how to prepare them. Follow the blog by email so you don’t miss a single leafy detail!

Do you have questions about how to grow greens or other vegetables? Call 1-800-342-2507 (8am – 1pm, Monday – Friday) and Ask the Experts. Or visit an “Ask a Master Gardener” table at a local Plant Clinic (listed by county/city on the Classes and Events page) or nearby Farmers Market.

If you have photos of greens you’re growing or a favorite greens recipe that you would like to share, please email me: mmalloy@umd.edu
Question: My husband and I purchased a waterfront property near the Chesapeake Bay. We are ready to begin landscaping but we have many issues to address. Shoreline erosion, controlling invasive plants, and managing water run-off are some of our concerns. Where do we begin? Can you help point us in the right direction?

Answer: Living within close proximity to the water comes with the added responsibility of being a good steward of the Bay. Maryland’s waterways are connected and the use of the land surrounding them has an effect on water quality and wildlife. If you live within the Critical Area (defined as all land within 1,000 feet landward of the edge of tidal waters and tidal wetlands or all waters of and lands under the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries), you are subject to special rules and regulations. Properly managing the Critical Area can protect both your property and the Bay.

Help is available from federal, state and county agencies. Begin your project by contacting your County Planning Office. There you will find assistance in determining if your property is indeed in the Critical Area. They will guide you through the process which involves obtaining permits from the Maryland Department of the Environment and provide guidance with plans and regulations. Plan to attend a workshop about living within Maryland’s Critical Area. The more informed you are about the process the more comfortable you will feel about making the proper choices. The following are some helpful websites: [http://www.firststopforthebay.org/](http://www.firststopforthebay.org/) and [http://www.dnr.state.md.us/ccp/sec/secontacts.asp](http://www.dnr.state.md.us/ccp/sec/secontacts.asp)

Question: My brother who lives in Michigan came to visit me in Maryland recently. We both are very interested in gardening and grow many different types of fruits and vegetables. He was telling me about a relatively new insect pest of small fruits that was found in Michigan a couple of years ago. Apparently it is some kind of fly. Is this insect pest found in Maryland and is there something I can do to protect my blueberries and grapes?

Answer: We believe your brother was referring to spotted wing drosophila (SWD), *Drosophila suzukii*. Unfortunately, this invasive pest from eastern Asia has been found in Maryland infesting raspberries and blackberries. This ‘vinegar fly’ is very destructive because it attacks ripe and unripe fruit, ruining the harvest. There are multiple generations of this small (1/10 inch) pale brown fly that has multiple dark stripes on its abdomen. The adult male fly has a dark spot on the tip of each wing. Female flies insert their ovipositor into soft skinned fruits and deposit eggs just under the skin. Eggs hatch and then maggots develop which cause the fruits to turn brown and become soft.

Managing begins with monitoring for the adults. We have plans to make a homemade trap on our website. Sprays should be applied immediately after detecting SWD in your monitor trap. Recommended sprays for homeowners are pyrethrums, neem or spinosad. Please contact the Home and Garden Information Center if you detect SWD in your home crop. Call 800-342-2507 or contact us through the ‘send a question’ feature on our website. For additional information on SWD see our website.
**MONTHLY TIPS FROM HGIC**

**JUNE**

**Lawns**
- Prepare your lawn for the summer heat to come. Maintaining proper mower height is critical for a successful lawn and its survival through summer. Try not to remove more than 1/3 of the grass blade at each mowing.
- Cut your cool season turf to a height of 3 inches. Mow zoysia grass and Bermuda grass to a height of 3 inches. This is a height recommendation change for residential zoysia and Bermuda grass lawns. The taller height suppresses weed growth better than the shorter height that was recommended in the past.
- Dull mower blades tear turfgrass and can lead to disease problems. White colored grass blade tips are an indication that the blade is dull. Sharpen your mower blades frequently, and always inspect the blade’s edge after striking stones and other hard objects.
- Do not fertilize fescue or bluegrass turf June - August.

**Woody Ornamentals**
- Poison ivy is very visible at this time. It has compound leaves with 3 shiny leaflets. The middle leaflet is on a longer petiole (stem) than the other 2 leaflets. Cut poison ivy vines back to the ground to weaken plants. If the stem is woody, paint the cut end with triclopyr or a glyphosate product immediately after cutting. Poison ivy that regrows after cutting can be cut or sprayed with glyphosate or triclopyr. Continue to spray or cut back plants through the growing season to eradicate this noxious weed. Do not handle any part of the plant. (HG 34)
- Healthy container and burlapped and balled trees can be safely planted throughout the summer as long as they are watered during dry periods. Thoroughly soak the root ball every few days until the roots become established. When selecting a shade tree choose a quality species and one that has a single, straight trunk. Common planting mistakes include planting in compacted or poorly drained soil, planting too deep and buying damaged trees with poor root systems. (HG 24)
- Bagworm larvae are hatching out this month and constructing new bags. Look for the little bags walking around on evergreen trees and shrubs and be prepared to spray infested trees with the microbial insecticide, Bt between now and mid-July. An application of Bt is recommended for evergreen shrubs or trees that were damaged by this pest last year. Spray once you’ve observed the small larvae. (HG 32)

**Ornamental Plants**
- Attract beneficial insects to your landscape by planting a wide variety of flowering annuals and perennials that will bloom over the entire growing season. Good choices are plants in the following families: daisy (marigolds, daises, asters, mums), carrot (dill, fennel, anise, yarrow, parsley), and mint (all mints and thymes). Note: plant mint in a container to keep growth under control!
- Pinch out the flower buds of asters, mums, goldenrod and other fall bloomers to keep plants bushy and prevent early flowering.
- The damage from four-lined plant bug feeding can be seen on a wide variety of plants. Insects are yellow with four black stripes down the back and produce small, circular dark spots, usually on new growth. (photo) No controls are necessary. Plants will outgrow moderate feeding damage.
- Slugs are found on all types of flowering plants. Their feeding damage will range from just a few holes to the entire plant stripped of its foliage in a few nights. Slime trails are a definitive sign of slug activity. Trap slugs with shallow pans of water and bread yeast or beer. Diatomaceous earth, sharp sand, or ground crab and oyster shell can also be applied around plants as physical barriers. (Read more...)

**Fruit**
- “June drop” of excessive fruits is a natural thinning phenomenon and is more pronounced where no hand thinning has occurred. Hand thin the fruits on plum, peach, apple and pear trees, leaving a 5-6 inch space between remaining fruits. Disease and insect problems, environmental stress, and lack of pollination or fertilization may have caused some earlier fruit drop. Pick up and throw out all dropped fruits.
- The first-year, non-flowering canes of bramble plants should be tip cut at 36 inches. Lateral branches coming off these primocanes should be tip cut at 18 inches. This will encourage heavy fruiting next year.
Most plant diseases are caused by fungi or bacteria. Both need moisture on the leaves to get started and to spread. June typically provides adequate rainfall and warmth for many leaf and fruit disease to get started. Thin foliage to encourage air movement and discourage excessive moisture on leaves.

If your tree experienced peach leaf curl disease this spring, exhibiting puckered, purple-red leaves and some defoliation, prevent it next year by spraying trees thoroughly with labeled fungicide when buds begin to swell. It is too late to get control now.

**Vegetable Gardening**

- Late blight is a fungal disease that devastated tomato and potato crops in gardens in 2009. It has been confirmed in most states that border Maryland. Learn to identify the symptoms - check out our [late blight photo gallery](#) and the [usablight website](#).
- The suckers or succulent shoots that develop from tomato plants at the soil line should be removed throughout the season. [video] You can plant these suckers for a late crop.
- Now is a good time to plant a second crop of radishes, beets, and beans to make full use of available garden space. [HG 16]
- Perpetual spinach, Malabar spinach, amaranth, sweet potato leaves, and Swiss chard are good heat tolerant salad greens for Maryland. ‘Grand Rapids’, ‘Red Sails’, ‘Deer Tongue’ and oak-leaf type lettuces are some of the more heat tolerant looseleaf lettuce varieties that can be sown now. ‘Jericho’ is a heat-tolerant romaine cultivar. Keep them fertilized, watered, and covered with a shade cloth or floating row cover if possible. If you don’t have garden space grow them in containers. These greens also do fine in the shade.
- Be sure to get stakes for tomatoes, cucumbers and pole beans in the ground right after transplanting or emergence. Doing this later in the season when they have grown large is difficult to do and may lead to some root and plant damage.
- Many species of insects become troublesome to vegetables this month. Aphids continue to feed on a wide variety of vegetable plants. It is not necessary to spray chemical insecticides. If necessary, an application of insecticidal soap or ultra fine horticultural oil will kill aphids, spider mites, whitefly and thrips. Even if you do nothing, native beneficial insects will attack the aphids and keep their numbers in check.
- Harlequin bugs are very colorful black and orange insects that feed on plants in the cabbage family. The adult females lay barrel-shape white eggs with black rings. Also, look for and destroy the copper colored eggs of squash bugs on the undersides of squash and pumpkin leaves. [Read more...]
- Cut back herbs through the summer to keep plants bushy and productive. Essential oils are most concentrated right before bloom. Cut and air-dry lavender flower stalks before the florets fully open.

**Soil**

- Earthworms are a sign of healthy soil and are normally seen in the greatest numbers in fall and spring. Adding organic matter in the form of composted leaves, manure, grass clippings, etc. will improve soil structure and attract earthworms.

**Fertilizer**

- Fertilize plants according to their specific needs based on soil test recommendations. Trees are fertilized after they drop their leaves in the fall, not in the spring. Mature shade trees do not typically need to be fertilized at all. They usually get adequate nutrients when the lawn is fertilized. Bluegrass and fescue turf is fertilized in the fall as well.
- Avoid the temptation to fertilize ornamental garden plants that appear to be healthy and productive. Over-fertilization, especially with fertilizers high in nitrogen, can lead to overly-succulent, weak growth and encourage sucking insect pests like scales, aphids and adelgids.
- To prevent nutrient pollution of groundwater and the Chesapeake Bay, keep fertilizers off of hard surfaces like driveways and sidewalks. Be cautious when fertilizing areas of your yard that border these hard surfaces.

**Mulch**

- Mulches should be applied only 1-2 inches deep around ornamental plants and kept away from shrub and tree trunks. Mature trees do not benefit from being mulched. Don’t lay down mulches containing wood chips (a non-bark mulch) around your home. These may attract termites. Bark mulches do not attract termites like wood chips.
- Various slime molds, like “dog-vomit fungi and stinkhorn fungi, may also be observed now growing in mulch. These are harmless but are unsightly and can be broken up, turned under or removed. [Read more...]
Compost

- Compost piles should be at least one cubic yard in volume to heat up properly. An equal mixture of green, (high nitrogen) and brown, (high carbon) materials is necessary for rapid composting. Grass clippings and spent plants from the flower and vegetable garden provide a good source of high nitrogen, (green materials) for the compost pile. Fallen leaves and old straw mulch are good sources of high carbon, (brown materials). Shred your materials with a lawnmower, string trimmer or machete to speed-up the breakdown process. (HG 35)

Seasonal and Indoor Plants

- This is a good time to root stem and leaf cuttings and to re-pot plants that are out-growing their containers. Re-pot into clean containers and be sure to wash out any fertilizer salt residues. Use lightweight, well-drained soilless potting mixes that contain peat moss and perlite.
- Begin fertilizing houseplants now that they are actively growing again.
- Fungus gnats are small, black insects that hover around plants. Prevent this problem by allowing your growing media to dry out between watering.

Indoor and Outdoor Pests

- Avoid mosquito and midge problems by turning over any pots, lids or saucers that might collect water and create a breeding site. Use Bt dunks in ponds that have no fish in them. The Bt dunks are safe with fish, but when fish are present they alone will take care of mosquito larvae.
- Hornets and wasps, including yellow jackets, are actively building nests now. Bees are also very active. Carpenter bees cause concern at this time of year. They make clean, round holes about ½ inch in diameter. They usually will not bother wood that is freshly painted or stained. They can be a problem in weathered and un-treated wood. Contact a pest control professional if you’re having a serious problem with carpenter bees.
- Many different types of ants may be found inside and outside the home. The largest ant is the carpenter ant. (photo) Carpenter ants tend to nest in wood that has been previously damaged by prolonged exposure to moisture. They build their main nests in outside wood piles or structures. You must locate the main nest to control this pest. Try using bait stations to control minor infestations of indoor ants.

Indoors they are most often found in kitchens and bathrooms.
- Mining bees are active now. (photo) They are solitary bees that nest in underground burrows, fly low over the ground and make 1/4 inch holes in loose soil. They are not aggressive and the males have no stinger. Control is not recommended.

Wildlife

- This is snake mating season, their most active time of year. Snakes are beneficial creatures and should not be harmed. The most likely encountered large snake is the Black Rat Snake. It can grow to about 5 feet long and found in both rural and suburban areas. (videos)
- This is also the season for many species of turtles to be moving about looking for egg-laying sites. This often causes them to cross roads. Try to avoid hitting them and when possible move them off the road placing them in the direction that they were headed. Occasionally large female snapping turtles (video) are found in the home landscape laying eggs. Simply leave them alone, but do keep small children and pets away from them as snappers can inflict a very painful bite.
- If you hear birds singing at night, it is most likely the Northern Mockingbird. (photo) They tend to be males that have not found a mate. Mockingbirds have the ability to imitate other birds’ songs.

JULY

Lawns

- Cicada killer wasps (photo) are becoming active. They are very large, 2 inches long, and resemble yellow jackets in coloration. Fortunately, these wasps are not aggressive and will not sting unless handled. They are solitary insects but may congregate in large numbers. These harmless wasps prey on cicadas and dig their nests in soil. They prefer sandy soils in full sun to dig their nests. No controls are recommended.
- Brown patch is a common fungal disease of fescue lawns that begins to appear in late June and early July as thin, brown areas. This disease is typically worse on over-fertilized lawns. No chemical controls are recommended; grasses will green up and recover in the fall. (Read more...)
Woody Ornamentals

• Soft scales may be found feeding on a variety of shade trees. Soft scales are insects related to aphids but they do not move once they are adults. They have a white waxy covering. Control them with a summer-rate application of horticultural oil. Oil sprays should be applied to dry foliage only when temperatures are below 80°F.

• Powdery mildew is a fungal disease that causes dogwood leaves to droop or curl and take on a purple or white color. Powdery mildew is noticeable on crabapple, dogwood, and many other kinds of trees. A powdery white growth can be observed on the upper leaf surfaces and trees will look ragged and unthrifty. No fungicide spray will be effective now. However, next year you can apply a labeled fungicide, like horticultural oil, before bud break. Try to select resistant cultivars when planting new trees.

Ornamental Plants

• Many perennials, like yarrow and salvia, can be cut back now to encourage re-blooming later this summer. Deadhead the spent blooms of annuals like zinnias and marigolds to encourage more vigorous continuous bloom. Cut sedums back about half way now to prevent them from falling over when in full bloom later this summer.

• Very large green beetles that resemble giant Japanese beetles are actively flying about at this time. These are green June beetles; their grub stage feeds on organic matter in the soil, the adults do not feed on many ornamental plants but can be damaging to fruit. (photo) Control by dropping into soapy water.

• You may notice wilt or dieback of vinca or periwinkle, which is caused by a fungus called phomopsis blight that girdles the stem. Thin out thick patches of periwinkle and pachysandra to improve air circulation and prune out infected plants.

• Brown, bulls-eye lesions on pachysandra are an indication of the fungal disease volutella. Thin out plants to improve circulation, and this disease will be managed. (Read more...)

• Water Gardening - Gambusia is a good fish to introduce to your pond for controlling mosquitoes. Goldfish, golden orf, rosie minnows and koi can also be added to the pond. The addition of Bti found in ‘mosquito dunks’, is also very good for the biological control of mosquitoes. Very hot weather raises the water temperature and this causes a decrease in the dissolved oxygen in the water. This can stress and kill larger fish. Aerate your pond with a pump, filter or fountain. Adding fresh, non-chlorinated water can also help.

Fruit

• Strawberries need summer care. If you have your plants in hills, pick off all runners. If you planted a matted row, encourage the runners to root and grow until the row is 2 feet wide. Remove weak and diseased plants.

• When harvesting blueberries, allow berries to remain on the plants for three to five days after they turn blue. Waiting several days allows berries to reach their maximum sugar content. However, many songbirds especially cat birds will eat them as they ripen. Some gardeners use a bird netting to cover the plants, unfortunately birds and snakes often get tangled in the netting and die when trapped in the hot sun. So leave them uncovered or build a large cage covered with chicken wire over the plants.

• Sap oozing from the bark, twigs or fruits of stone fruit trees is common and should not be confused with peach tree borer damage. Borers typically enter the lower trunk around the soil line and feed on the cambium. They kick out a mixture of frass (sawdust like material) and sap, which can be scraped away to expose the feeding tunnels. Many times the borers can be killed in their tunnels by poking them with a fine wire.

Vegetables

• It’s time to begin thinking of fall vegetables. Seed for fall crops of broccoli and cauliflower should be sown in containers by the 3rd or 4th week in July. Late crops of squash, beans and cucumbers can be direct sown through the end of July.

• Squash vine borers are hatching out and boring into squash and pumpkin vines. Monitor plants for signs of wilting and entrance holes on lower stems. You may see sawdust-like frass around the hole. Stems may contain more than one larva. They can feed inside the stems for up to 2 weeks. The easiest and surest method of control is to cut a slit above the hole with a razor, remove the 1 inch long white larva with a brown head, and mound up soil around the wound. (photos and video)

• Early blight of tomatoes can appear now. (photos) Small, irregular brown lesions with a yellow halo develop on lower leaves. The spots have a bulls-eye pattern. They will enlarge and entire leaves will turn yellow and then die. Defoliation can then lead to...
sunscald of tomato fruits. Remove badly infected lower leaves, keep a thick organic mulch around plants and avoid overhead watering. Applications of tri-basic copper will slow down severe infections.

**Soil**
- Bare soil is very prone to erosion from summer thunder storms and should be covered with mulch, groundcovers or turf.
- Avoid the temptation to turn over or dig into wet soil. This can cause long-term damage to the structure of your soil.

**Fertilizer**
- To prevent burning, sweep granular fertilizers off plant foliage. Avoid the temptation to over-fertilize ornamental garden plants that appear to be healthy and productive.
- Over-fertilization, especially with fertilizers that are high in nitrogen, can lead to overly succulent, weak growth and encourage sucking insect pests like scales, aphids and adelgids. To help prevent nutrient pollution of groundwater and the Chesapeake Bay sweep fertilizers off of hard surfaces like driveways and sidewalks.

**Mulch**
- Avoid buying or using mulches that have been stored in large, high piles and smell of alcohol or methanol. The alcohol in the mulch will damage or possibly kill your plants. If you get a load of mulch delivered that has a strong alcohol smell, simply spread open the pile and let it air out for a few days to permit the alcohol to evaporate out.

**Compost**
- Keep sticks, roots and woody stems out of your compost pile. They take too long to breakdown and make it difficult to turn the ingredients. Finished compost is the very best starter material for a compost pile because it contains nitrogen and a huge number of microbes. Consider placing a tarp or lid over your pile to prevent water logging during wet periods, conserve moisture during dry periods, and prevent nutrient leaching.

**Indoor and Outdoor pests**
- Earwigs are dark brown insects, about ¾ inches long with a pair of pincers at the end of the abdomen. **(photo)** They can be found both inside and outside the home in moist areas and are most active in the evening. They are predators of insect pests, like aphids, and also eat seedlings and chew holes in large plants. They are a “nuisance pest”, causing very little damage to plants.
- Ticks are active year-round, especially now. Wear light colored clothing, apply repellent, and get in the habit of checking yourself, your children and pets closely for ticks after spending time outdoors. Repellents are also effective at keeping ticks at bay. Deer ticks that can carry Lyme disease are especially high around the Chesapeake Bay.

**Wildlife**
- Rabbits are a frequent nuisance in flower and vegetable gardens, feeding on young and tender plants. They can be excluded with a low, 2 ft. high fence that is secured to the ground. You can also repel them with commercial repellents, bloodmeal, or by sprinkling hot pepper flakes around plants. Reapply after rain.
- Remove bird nests attached to your house after the birds have left to prevent problems with bird mites coming into your home. These small mites do bite people. Bird nests may also be found in rain gutters, chimneys. **(Read more...)**
- Where deer are feeding on garden and landscape plants, apply a repellent, such as “Deer-Away”, “Hinder”, “Ro-Pel”, “Liquid Fence”, “Repellex” to vulnerable plants. If deer pressure is heavy and the repellents are not doing the job very well, try rotating repellents. Small deodorant soap bars hung on the shrubs or on sticks around the plants you want to protect have been used with some success. A strand of electric fence about three feet high around your garden and property is helpful. This may sound too low but it works as deer always sniff around before entering an area and will get shocked by the wire. Baiting the fence with aluminum foil smeared with peanut butter will help teach the deer about electric fences.
**August**

**Lawns**
- In dry periods grasses go dormant but recover when rain returns. Newly seeded or sodded lawns may actually be dead. This month, mid-August through mid-October is the best time to start new lawns and renovate or overseed existing lawns. We recommend a turf-type tall fescue cultivar at a rate of 4 lbs. of seed per 1,000 sq. ft. of area for overseeding, or 8 lbs. per 1000 sq. ft. for new lawns. If your lawn area contains more than 50% weeds, consider a total lawn renovation. Newly seeded turf must be watered regularly. See HG 102, Lawn Establishment, Renovation, and Overseeding.

**Summer patch and dollar spot may be seen now on some irrigated bluegrass lawns. No fungicide sprays are recommended once the disease has already started. Control thatch and soil compaction, maintain fertility by applying fertilizer in the fall and overseed with resistant cultivars.**

**Woody Ornamentals**
- August is frequently dry. If so, water deeply by allowing water to soak the soil directly underneath and around newly planted trees and shrubs. Check the depth of water penetration into the soil by digging a small hole after watering. Hard-crusted mulch will repel water and needs to be broken up with a rake or hoe to help the rain and irrigation water to penetrate the soil.
- Fall webworm (photo) is a late summer pest. It is a 1-2 inch long hairy caterpillar that creates large tent-like nests on the ends of branches of various shade trees and shrubs. It is unsightly but causes little damage. They can be left alone or knocked out of the tree with a broom, by a hard water spray, or pruning them out and disposing of them in the trash.
- Numerous caterpillars, including leafrollers, orange-striped oak worm, green-striped maple worms, oak skeletonizers and sawflies (photo) are feeding on various shade trees. No controls are necessary unless feeding is severe. You may also see some large and unusual caterpillars with various colored spines and knobs that have been feeding in trees and are getting ready to pupate. These are mostly giant silk moths and should be left alone. Many of these have stinging hairs. (Read more...)
- You may notice the browning of black locust leaves caused by locust leaf miner feeding. (photo) This is a perennial pest that does not debilitate the trees. **Locust trees put out new growth throughout the growing season and are not adversely affected by the feeding damage.**

**Ornamental Plants**
- Plant hardy mums for fall color this month so they will become well established before winter.
- Late August through September is usually a good time to transplant, divide and plant perennials such as daylily, liriope, and Echinacea. Be sure to keep them well watered during dry periods.
- Poison ivy foliage can be effectively controlled with a labeled herbicide applied to the foliage later this month. You will have to make multiple applications to significantly weaken and kill the plants. If you cannot reach the foliage to spray, cut the vine down to the ground. Treat the cut surface still attached to the roots, with glyphosate or triclopyr. Do not handle the hairy poison ivy vines with bare hands even after they have died back.
- In hot, dry weather, spider mite populations can be high on many landscape plants. Damage occurs on a wide variety of flowering plants. Spider mites are pinpoint size sucking pests that can be observed on leaf undersides with the unaided eye. Keep plants hosed down during hot dry weather. Spraying insecticidal soap or horticultural oil on mite damaged plants during hot weather can cause serious leaf burn. If you notice spider mite damage on different types of plants in your yard you might consider purchasing and releasing beneficial mites, which will hunt down and consume the pest mites. They are a good value and environmentally safe.
- If turf grasses have failed due to poor location (i.e. too shady for turf), consider planting appropriate groundcovers this fall. Soil should be loosened and organic matter incorporated prior to planting. Select plants based on the amount of sun they require. Good choices include striped or spotted wintergreen, trailing arbutus, moss phlox, Epimedium, sweet woodruff, partridge berry and ferns. Groundcovers are also useful as a border around buildings and garden beds. However, do not plant rapid growers near property lines or woodlands where they can become invasive. (HG 89)
- Water Gardens – water lilies are growing rapidly and should be fed with fertilizer tablets regularly according to label instructions. Periodically remove the older, yellow leaves and spent flower heads of tropical lilies.
Fruit

- Pears are beginning to ripen. Asian pears should be allowed to ripen on the tree. European pears ripen from the inside out and should be picked when a change in background color is observed. Keeping them on the tree until they are fully ripe will result in the centers becoming rotten.

- Harvest figs when they are slightly soft. They may suffer minor insect damage during the ripening process and ants may enter the small eye at the bottom of the fruit as the fig ripens. This is a small price to pay for fresh, tree-ripened figs. If you are having problems with birds or squirrels, invest in some bird netting to cover your bushes.

- Peaches will ripen this month. Pick when their background color changes from pale green to yellow or white and before fruits become fully ripened. This will reduce the incidence of brown rot disease. Bring peaches indoors, submerge briefly in a 1:10 bleach to water solution to help prevent rot, and then allow them to ripen in the kitchen.

- Be sure to keep your blueberry plants properly watered. These plants will not tolerate heat and drought. Extreme drought can kill the canes and damage flower/fruit buds for next year’s crop.

Vegetables

- Knowing when to harvest your garden at its peak is important. Many vegetables need to be cured or dried and then stored under proper conditions. Onions should be harvested when tops die back. Let them dry in the garden after digging or tie the stems together and hang in a garage, attic or shed. Rub soil off with hands or cloth, don’t wash. Washing can cause a rot to start while in storage. When the neck is tight and the outer scales dry, trim the tops and roots within an inch or two of the bulb and store in a cool, dry location.

- Sweet potato roots will continue to enlarge until frost so check root size to determine when to harvest. Handle harvested roots gently and cure the roots by storing them at 85°F. and high humidity for 4-7 days. Thereafter, your sweet potatoes can be stored in a cool, dry location. (Read more...)

- Dig white storage potatoes on a cloudy, warm day after plants begin to die back. Let them lay on the ground for a few hours before bringing them inside. They should not be washed as this can cause a rot to occur in storage. Store potatoes in a dark, cool location (35°- 40°F.) (Read more...)

- Gourds should be allowed to dry on the vine and harvested prior to frost; leave 2-3 inches of stem for a handle. Let gourds cure in a well-ventilated, cool dark location. To reduce rot, rub each gourd gently with rubbing alcohol or a weak bleach solution. Don’t allow them to touch one another while drying.

- Peppers that are allowed to ripen on the plant will be subject to attack by the fungal diseases alternaria and anthracnose. No chemical controls are recommended. Picking some of your peppers while they are still green will encourage the plant to produce more fruit.

- If you have persistent problems with foliar diseases follow these steps next year:
  o Rotate tomato crop to a new area of the garden.
  o Increase the spacing between plants.
  o Cover the soil with a mulch to prevent the pathogen from splashing from the soil to the foliage.
  o Remove badly infected leaves during the growing season.
  o As a last resort, spray a labeled fungicide, like fixed copper. Pull up and dispose of infected plants at the end of the season. Don’t compost these plants unless they can be shredded and hot composted.

Fertilizer

- Do not fertilize shade trees, fruit trees, or shrubs at this time. Fertilization in August will stimulate new growth at a time when plants are beginning to enter dormancy and could result in excessive winter damage. Trees are typically fertilized after they drop their leaves in the fall. Mature, healthy shade trees do not need to be fertilized.

- Bluegrass and fescue turf is also fertilized in the fall. Help protect the Bay by using fertilizers wisely. Fertilizers and lime should be applied in accordance with soil test recommendations. Overuse of nitrogen fertilizers may contribute to groundwater pollution. Avoid getting fertilizer on sidewalks and driveways where it may wash into storm drains, streams and eventually into the Bay.

Compost

- Many kinds of interesting invertebrates live in a compost pile including manure worms, centipedes, millipedes, pill bugs, and pseudoscorpions. They are part of the composting ecosystem and should be appreciated, not feared. Do not attempt to spray or otherwise kill these beneficial critters.
Seasonal and Indoor plants

- Now is still a good time to repot houseplants that are potbound. Cut the pot bound root ball with a sharp knife at 2-4 inch intervals and remove any brown, dead roots. Repot into larger containers that have been cleaned of any fertilizer salt residues (white crust on pots).
- If houseplants are outdoors for the summer keep them well watered to avoid heat and dryness damage to the roots. Plants kept indoors do not require as much watering.
- Continue to monitor houseplants kept indoors for mealy bug, spider mites, aphids, whitefly and scale. If spider mites are a problem consider spraying with a labeled horticultural oil or soap and pyrethrum mix. If the plants are large do your spraying outdoors. Houseplants kept outdoors usually have few pest problem because they are growing so well and the predators and parasites outdoors keep the pests under control.

Indoor and Outdoor Pests

- Populations of pantry pests like Indian meal moths (photo), cigarette beetles, and carpet beetles (photo) can build up over the summer because most people do less baking and infested products go unnoticed. In late summer these insects are often found around windows trying to get out of your home. No chemical controls are recommended. These pests can be swept up or vacuumed.
- Try to ignore hornet, bee and wasp nests found outside, especially if they are located in a tree. These are beneficial creatures that will not sting unless disturbed or provoked. However, if a hornet' or yellow jacket nest is a threatening nuisance such as under your deck or next to your door you can destroy it at night with a labeled spray. Contact a pest control professional if yellow jackets are nesting inside the walls or attic of your home.
- You may notice the European hornet stripping the bark off shrubs (especially lilac) and trees. This stripping of the bark is usually minor and does no real harm to a shrub or tree. The European hornet is a large yellow and brown hornet (photo) that nests in cavities in trees, stumps, wood piles, sheds, etc. and feeds on insects. Unlike most other wasps and hornets this one is a night flyer.

Wildlife

- Ruby-throated hummingbirds continue to visit flowers and nectar feeders. Keep nectar feeders clean and change nectar solution frequently during hot weather to prevent spoiling.
- Keep birdfeeders and baths cleaned and replenished. Change water frequently to avoid mosquitoes.
- Ground hogs can be destructive around the home and garden. They feed on a wide range of vegetables and ornamental plants and will gnaw and chew on wooden boards and siding. They dig burrows in soil or may inhabit areas under decks and porches. If you cannot live with the groundhog, you will have to consider live trapping. Some county animal control offices may euthanize live-trapped groundhogs. They will not live long if re-located and you may be adding to someone else’s problems. There are trappers you can hire to take care of your problem. Contact the Nuisance Wildlife Information Line at 1-877-463-6497 for trapping information in your county.
- Where raccoons are a problem, secure trashcan lids with bungee cords and don’t leave dog food outside. Keep soffits and all vent screens in your attic in good working order to prevent raccoons from entering your home.
If you enjoy receiving the HGIC e-newsletter, stay in touch more often by “liking” us on Facebook and following us on Twitter. Go to HGIC’s facebook page for a preview. If you are already on Facebook, enter Home and Garden Information Center in the search field and click on the like button. Once you “like” the HGIC page, you can read posted comments, post questions, and comment on posts by others. Twitter is another way we are communicating with Marylanders. To learn more visit our twitter page and click the button.

Thank you for subscribing to Home and Garden News. Our Certified Professional Horticulturists are available Monday - Friday, 8 AM - 1 PM to answer your questions. Call 800-342-2507 (in-state) or 410-531-1757 (out-of-state). Please visit us on the web at hgic.umd.edu. If you wish to be removed from this mailing list, please e-mail jljacobs@umd.edu.