Have you seen this?

Wilted summer squash plants?

There are three major reasons why zucchini and yellow squash plants wilt:

1. Thirsty for water. July was hot and dry.
2. If watering doesn't bring your wilted plant back to life, it could be a squash vine borer problem (pictured above).
3. If you see no signs of squash vine borers your plants may be suffering from bacterial wilt disease spread by cucumber beetles.

August Tips

- Avoid mowing your lawn during extreme dry and hot weather. Mowing wounds grass blades creating more surface area for plant moisture to escape.
- 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 with labeled sprays at night.
- Do not spray pesticides in your garden unless you've
observed a particularly serious pest and the damage caused by the pest. Follow all label directions. Always select the shortest residual, least toxic insecticide to avoid killing beneficial insects.

More seasonal tips

Impatiens Downy Mildew - has been confirmed in Montgomery County.
Bagworms - time to monitor evergreens for feeding activity.
Brown Patch - has been recently reported in MD lawns.

Grow It Eat It

What's up with this cucumber!

Quiz: what the heck is up with this cucumber? (Or is it a tiny barbell??)

This is a question that MGs get a lot during the summer (not the barbell part, usually). The answer: the poor thing was incompletely pollinated. To encourage more pollinators (mostly bees) to visit your plant's flowers, plant lots of herbs and annual or perennial flowers that will provide them plenty of nectar and pollen. Sometimes there will be a drop-off in pollination anyway, due to wet or (we could only hope) chilly weather, but the bees will come back if you help them along. And yes, you can still eat the misshapen fruits, though often they start to rot and fall off by themselves.

Anyone else having a difficult cucumber year? Like squash, cucumbers seem to be either too abundant or complete failures. This year, at the Derwood demo garden, we've had a hard time getting our cukes to grow tall enough to climb their new gorgeous trellises (which you can admire, unfortunately all too clearly, at our Grow It Eat It Open House this Saturday). Slow start due to weather, munching by cucumber beetles, heat stress, a bit of disease - some years it's just every problem at once!

If you're also having a terrible cucumber year, try reviewing the Grow It Eat It cucumber profile page, and maybe you'll find the information you need to fix the problems. Quick suggestions: floating row cover over the young plants; a late start to the season to avoid the worst of the cucumber beetles; frequent watering; growing on a trellis up off the ground. And crossing your fingers!

By Erica Smith

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Featured Video

How to fertilize your lawn and protect the Chesapeake
In this video we show you how to take a soil sample, determine the amount of fertilizer needed, and calibrate your spreader to have a healthy lawn while protecting the environment in Maryland.

--- Watch video on YouTube
--- Maryland’s Lawn Fertilizer Law information
--- Lawn information on HGIC
--- Soil testing information

Q&A

My lawn was looking great up until about 3 weeks ago. There aren’t any dead patches so I don’t think it is a disease but there is dead grass blades scattered sparsely around the lawn making it look unhealthy. In the center of some of the blades there are tan lesions. What is going on?

This does sound like brown patch which is caused by the *Rhizoctonia* fungus. The name brown patch is something of a misnomer; it is more likely to appear as an overall thinning of the turf than as brown patchy areas. Brown patch occurs on tall fescue during periods of high humidity with warm overnight temperatures (above 68 degrees), especially in rainy spells. We don’t recommend homeowners use a fungicide, because brown patch is not a “killing” disease and the turf will recover on its own with just a change in weather. Plan to overseed in fall.

--- More info on brown patch

Have a plant or pest question? University of Maryland Extension’s experts have answers! Send in your questions and photos here.

Have a suggestion for a topic to cover in the HGIC newsletter? Send in your suggestions.