

Be vigilant for garden, lawn pests

We have just been through the hottest, driest month our gardens have had to contend with in many years, and our plants and lawns are stressed to the limit.

It's time to inspect our lawns and gardens carefully for insect damage and to take care of trouble promptly. A stressed plant — grass, ornamental or vegetable — is more susceptible to insect damage than a healthy one.

The first thing is to know what insect has been causing damage. If you can't identify the problem, take a damaged leaf or stem or the whole plant to your local nursery or County Extension Office. The experts will tell you what is needed for control measures.

PESTS in the home garden can be tolerated; we just don't want them to get out of control. A healthy lawn and garden, regularly watered and maintained, will be less of a target for pests. Vigilance is the key here.

If you choose to use pesticides and insecticides, be sure to follow label directions exactly and store the con-

tainer properly. One of the biggest mistakes home gardeners make is inappropriate use of these chemicals. The old saying, "If a little bit is good a little more is better," is NOT the rule. Be sure to use the proper product in recommended quantities. If you have a product on your shelf that has been banned by the state of Michigan, the best way to get rid of it — if you can't find a collection center — is to follow the motto, "Dilution is the solution." I am told that this is the best way to dispose of unusable chemicals.

LAWN DAMAGE to look for includes powdery mildew, a white coating on the grass blades and sod webworms. These are small gray or tan moths that fly over your lawn and lay eggs that develop into worm-like larvae, which feed on the grass blades and make them turn brown and die. The larvae have brown heads, and excrete to brown bodies with dark spots.

Garden damage will come from aphids, which have soft bodies varying in color. Green, black and gray

forms are common. These tiny insects, found on tender new growth, cause the foliage to curl.

Cabbage worms like not only cabbage, but also cauliflower, broccoli and Brussels sprouts. The adult of this insect is a white butterfly that flies around these crops. The larvae feed on the foliage, but can also be found in the heads of these vegetables.

TREES AND shrubs may be suffering from mites. These tiny insects suck the sap from the foliage of many plants, causing them to turn a bronze color. Small webs are also a sign of mites. They can also be detected by shaking foliage over a

piece of white paper.

Aphids, also called plant lice, suck the sap from plants, which then excrete a sticky sap called honeydew. If sticky droplets are found on leaves and even cars and lawn furniture, you can be sure that aphids are present. Sooty mold, a black fungus, will grow on the honeydew.

Although lawn mowing is less frequent now, the importance of keeping your mower blade sharp can't be stressed too much. Also, if you vary the direction in which the lawn is mowed, mower tracks can be prevented and high and low spots will be less obvious.

I hope you have been harvesting



down to earth

Marty Figley

your herbs before they become overgrown and lose the oils that give them their good flavor. Vines can be made from tarragon, basil, mints

and many combinations of herbs. The chive blossoms have faded, but be ready to make that lovely vinegar next year when they bloom.

Bonsai classes announced

Bonsai, the art of miniature gardening, is the subject of free classes to be given at two Eaton Nursery locations this weekend by George Greco, bonsai master. The classes will be given at 11

a.m. and 2 p.m. Saturday at Eaton Nursery, 5899 W. Maple, West Bloomfield, and 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. Sunday at Eaton Nursery, 1655 Auburn Road, Rochester Hills. Public is welcome.

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