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University of California
Agriculture and Natural Resources
Making a Difference for California

The Green Scene

UC CE

January 2017

Meetings and Announcements

35th Annual Landscape Management Seminar

The 35th Annual Landscape Management Seminar is scheduled for February 1, 2017, at Hodels. Visiting speakers include Jim Downer of UC Cooperative Extension, Ventura, who will speak about plant diseases. We'll have a noon demonstration, updates on laws and regulations, and an update on current pest problems. Abate-a-Weed is cooperating as a sponsor for this meeting and is handling registration. We have been approved for 8 hours of PCA credit, including 2 hours of laws.

Horticulture V Class

I plan to offer Horticulture V in the spring of 2017 beginning February 16. The class will run Thursdays, beginning at our usual time of 5:30 pm. Topics include landscape design, new water conserving plants, oaks & compost, ag and groundwater legislation, low input turf, and others. We have a number of guest speakers coming. The class should be fun and interesting, since horticulture is fun and interesting.

It is not necessary for a person to have participated in one of our other horticulture classes, such as Horticulture I, II, etc. The Horticulture V class is stand-alone and offers topics of practical interest. If you plan to attend, please let us know via email to cekern@ucanr.edu or 661 868-6200. If you would like to see the syllabus, please send me an email.

As a post-script, I plan to offer Horticulture I and Horticulture IV beginning in August, 2017.

2017 Horticultural Tour: Iceland

It's certainly not too late to join our group for a visit to the spectacular geology and horticulture of Iceland, July 15-22, 2017. Iceland is the world's leader in use of geothermal energy for plant production, and its natural landscapes have plants with specific adaptations that allow them to thrive in low-water environments—low-water because the ground is frozen during winter. The details for this upcoming and exciting visit are found in a .pdf at http://travelgallery.com/images/Hort_Itinerary_2017__ver_2.pdf

Please contact me if questions, jfkarlik@ucdavis.edu or 661 868-6220.

Winter Pruning of Outdoor Roses

Although I ran this article in December's *Greenscene*, I offer again there since December was a busy month for most people. In December / early January, annual winter pruning will be needed for hybrid teas and grandifloras. Rose pruning in home gardens and landscapes can be a simple matter requiring relatively little time. As for other woody

plants, pruning is used for roses to invigorate the plant and direct its growth, but the amount of pruning depends on rose type and purpose in the landscape.

Broadly speaking, most roses grown outdoors can be divided into two groups. Rose grown for cut flowers include hybrid teas and grandifloras, for example, the classic varieties 'Peace' and 'Oklahoma.' The shrub- or landscape-type roses are grown as floriferous shrubs, for example, the varieties 'Pink Simplicity,' 'Knock Out,' and 'Flutterbye.'

For hybrid tea and similar roses, we remove dead, diseased and damaged wood as well as older canes showing poor vigor. Canes severely affected by scale insects can also be removed. The rose plant can be thinned, removing central canes to favor 3-5 canes growing toward the outside. Although a standard recommendation is to make cuts at a 45° angle just above an outward-facing bud, it is not necessary for plant health to be so precise, since roses have many dormant buds and can form new buds readily. For hybrid teas and grandifloras, about 10-15 minutes per plant should be enough time for pruning. In other words, don't worry too much about exactly how and where cuts are made. An exception to that statement would be pruning for show roses and, of course, we are not talking about greenhouse flower production where pruning is specific per variety. The function of the rose plant in the landscape should influence the amount of pruning. Roses used for screens or accent plantings can be lightly pruned so as to retain their size, removing perhaps 1/3 of the height. Pruning a rose to shorter canes does result in longer flower stems, if that is important to you.

Shrub- or landscape-type roses should be treated as floriferous shrubs, and should not be pruned back to a few short canes as hybrid teas can be. Rather, older canes can be removed, and (gasp) a hedge trimmer can be used for speed to shorten long canes and make the plant a bit smaller in size. Use of a hedge trimmer, however, does <u>not</u> imply that plants should be formed into little globes or boxes, diminishing their aesthetic value and defeating their purpose in the landscape. Landscape roses are typically (and should be) only lightly pruned, since they function as colorful shrubs, so upright varieties can be left to 5-8 feet.

A recent peer-reviewed study conducted by Dr. Jim Downer of the University of California Cooperative Extension showed that it is variety rather than pruning that has the most influence on flower number and growth of landscape-type outdoor roses (Downer et al., 2015, *Acta Horticulturae* 1064: 253-258). There were few differences in plant quality between intermediate pruning treatments (36 or 18 inches height). Severe pruning (6 inches) resulted in significantly fewer flowers in most varieties during the four-year study period. Plants pruned lightly had the greatest number of flowers. Variety selection had the most influence on plant characteristics over four years.

The University of California has three free publications that describe the care of outdoor roses, including insect and disease management. These can be read and downloaded from the UCIPM website, www.ipm.ucdavis.edu. Also, the University has a booklet, Healthy Roses, available via its publications catalog at http://anrcatalog.ucanr.edu.

Dormant Treatment for Home Fruit Trees and other Plants

Many Kern County residents who have fruit trees decide to apply a dormant treatment during the winter months. Dormant sprays can aid in controlling certain insects and diseases. Some common spray materials, such as horticulture oil and lime-sulfur, are classified as organic. While a dormant spray will not harm a fruit tree if applied properly, it

is not necessary in many situations. Before applying, we should ask ourselves whether we are just following habit or our neighbor's practices.

Insect control usually comes to mind first, and scale insects are particularly susceptible to control with dormant oil. Application of horticultural oil can be used to reduce the overwintering population of some other tree pests, but oil is not a complete management program. The oil acts to cover insects, interfering with respiration. Addition of a small amount (1-1/2 – 2% by volume) of an insecticide will improve the effectiveness of the spray. Horticultural oil may be applied to most deciduous fruit species from December 1 to February 1. Plums and walnuts should be treated, if needed, with a delayed-dormant treatment, applied February 1 to 15. For deciduous fruits such as peaches, the insects controlled include San Jose scale, brown apricot scale, soft scale, European red mite (not common in Kern County), and peach twig borer. For apples, some aphid control is also possible. For home citrus, a dormant spray may be used to reduce the scale population. Oil may spot the rind, but the damage is only cosmetic and does not affect internal quality. Note that many insects, such as green fruit beetle, codling moth, and most mites, are <u>not</u> controlled by a dormant spray. Flathead and shothole borers are also <u>not</u> controlled with dormant or any other spray.

Disease control is not usually necessary in home orchards on the valley floor in Kern County because our dry climate does not favor development of fungus diseases. Additional winter rainfall, more likely further north or in foothill areas, does favor disease development. However, in the Bakersfield area, the diseases peach leaf curl and shothole (also called shoot blight) may develop in susceptible varieties of peaches and nectarines, and can be prevented by application of suitable fungicides ahead of the disease. Treatment during a disease outbreak is usually not effective because most fungicides act as protectants rather than eradicants. Unfortunately, a single spray will not control both diseases unless applied in late fall or early winter. Peach leaf curl can be controlled with Bordeaux mixture or a fixed copper fungicide, such as COCS or copper hydroxide, applied in January. Bordeaux mixture is difficult to apply and some of the liquid copper fungicides are not very effective. If a fixed cooper is not available, a lime-sulfur (calcium polysulfide) fungicide can be used. If shothole is a problem, a fungicide should be applied earlier in mid-November to mid-December, but lime-sulfur does not control shothole.

Fireblight, a bacterial disease of apple, crabapple, pear, Asian pear and quince, is not controlled by a dormant treatment.

Be sure to read and carefully follow label directions of any plant protection chemical.

Crabgrass and the Rule of the Superbowl

Crabgrass is one of the most common weeds in turf in the Bakersfield area. Because it is an annual, it grows from seed each year. Therefore, its biology offers an opportunity to suppress it as it is becoming established, specifically through the use of a pre-emergent herbicide.

In the Bakersfield area, crabgrass seed begins to germinate around the first week of February. That is well ahead of the time bermudagrass and other warm season grasses emerge from dormancy, so crabgrass can have a month or more without competition from other plants. Because it reestablishes from seed, that process can be interrupted with herbicides that interfere with rooting of seeds, i.e., pre-emergents. There are several products on the market that can be used with bermudagrass or tall fescue (be sure to check

the label!) that will suppress crabgrass but not injure the underlying turf. However, most of these herbicides have little post-emergent activity; that is, they are not effective against established plants. Therefore, they need to be applied before the plants become established. Timing is key. If applied too late, they will not be effective.

By some quirk of fate, the playing of the Superbowl and crabgrass germination occur about the same time in Bakersfield and the southern San Joaquin Valley. So, a handy way to remember when to apply a pre-emergent herbicide is to associate its application with the game. If one does that, the herbicide will not be applied too late.

The wet weather we've had so far this winter will certainly be favorable for crabgrass germination.

John Karlik
Environmental Horticulture/Environmental Science

Disclaimer: Discussion of research findings necessitates using trade names. This does not constitute product endorsement, nor does it suggest products not listed would not be suitable for use. Some research results included involve use of chemicals which are currently registered for use, or may involve use which would be considered out of label. These results are reported but are not a recommendation from the University of California for use. Consult the label and use it as the basis of all recommendations.