

Hackberry Butterflies

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. The past few weeks I've had numerous calls about lots of grayish brown, rather nondescript butterflies or moths. While not 100% accurate, the easiest way to differentiate between butterflies and moths is that butterflies are generally active in the day, and moths are more active at night. These critters were active in the day and when we say that there were lots of them, I mean hundreds to thousands of them. These are the Hackberry Emperor or simply the Hackberry butterfly. As their name implies the caterpillars feed on hackberry trees and only on hackberry trees. In areas where there are a lot of hackberry trees, and we have these areas along the Kansas and Republican rivers, as well as other places, the first generation of these caterpillars will totally strip all the leaves off the trees. Walking through hackberry stands in the height of this activity it will actually sound like it's raining from all the caterpillar droppings that are falling - let's just say you don't want to look up and open your mouth at the same time! As the caterpillars mature they move to the base of the trees, form a chrysalis for several days and then emerge as the adult or butterfly. Needless to say, if there are enough caterpillars to strip all the leaves off of 20 acres of hackberries you are going to have a LOT of butterflies. These butterflies happen to be very friendly and seem to be attracted to light colors. If you walk into an area with a lot of these butterflies they may land on you by the hundreds. The good news is that they are harmless, and the trees releaf without any harm. Cool!

This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Crabgrass

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. One thing that eight inches of rain in early June will do for you is to get a lot of crabgrass growing. Even if you applied crabgrass preventer, eight inches of rain in two weeks may well overpower the herbicide. If all of a sudden you have a thick lush stand of grass where you had a thin or no stand of grass a month ago, it's highly likely that you have crabgrass. And if you look at it from a distance and it looks kind of pale green or yellowish green, yup, you've got crabgrass! The good news is that you don't have dust blowing out of those areas. The better news is that we do have a couple of good herbicides that are quite effective on crabgrass. What you want to look for, in the lawn care section or weed killer section, is the magical words crabgrass killer. The chemical names of the two products are quinclorac and fenoxaprop-p-ethyl. Quinclorac is usually in combination with standard broadleaf weed killers. Look for names like weed-b-gon max plus crabgrass control. This product is going to be most effective on smaller crabgrass, or foxtail which it controls equally well. By smaller I mean definitely not headed out and ideally with less than six leaves. But used now, on smaller crabgrass, and it is very effective. The fenoxaprop product may only be found as bermudagrass control for lawns by Bayer advanced. It will also work on crabgrass and even very large crabgrass. Both products are safe to use on fescue and bluegrass lawns. Read and follow the label directions and be advised that while effective, they work slowly, or seem to, but know they are working! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Oak Vein Galls

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Galls are abnormal growths on plants. Sometimes they are caused by viruses, but most often they are caused by an insect who has developed a special adaptation. Early in the year you can find all sorts of bumps and lumps on the leaves of many species of trees. Break these open and you'll find a small insect inside. Some gall insects, like the oak apple gall make a gall on oak trees that can be the size of a small apple. While some galls can be a problem for plants, most of the time they are unsightly, a novelty or a nuisance and there really isn't too much that can be done about them. Once the small insect has hatched out of the egg and started feeding to the point that it is fully enclosed by the gall, there isn't any way to spray them. Some of the newer systemic insecticides might help with some of the galls, but since the galls usually aren't economically significant in their damage, work hasn't been done on them. One gall that is showing up a lot this year is the oak vein gall, especially on pin oak. This gall insect creates abnormal swelling of the leaf along the veins. It looks like the veins are all distorted with odd tissue growth. If you carefully start to break this tissue open you'll eventually find the larvae that is causing this. This gall is caused by a non-stinging tiny wasp. The formation of this callous tissue on the leaves will cause them to distort and curl. It might almost look like herbicide drift damage, but will only be on pin oaks and herbicide drift won't have the weird tissue growth along the veins. The only thing to do is nothing as the leaf is still functional! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.