

Hail Damage

By: Kelly Feehan, Extension Educator

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Hail damage was severe in some areas and I've been asked what to do and what to expect. The first thing we share about horticulture plants is to wait about a week and see how plants respond.

The damage hail causes can vary greatly depending on the size of hailstones, wind velocity, duration of the hail storm and the type of plant affected.

Here are some rules of thumb for vegetables. Plants have growing points and recovery depends on if these were damaged. If the growing point is fine, recovery can occur even if leaves are tattered.

Torn and tattered green leaves continue to protect growing points and do their job of photosynthesis, although less efficiently. This is why they should not be removed immediately unless completely stripped of green tissue.

The leaves of cucurbits like melons, squash and cucumbers, can look terrible, but if plants have an established root system and intact growing points, they usually produce new leaves. If plants are showing signs of recovery after about a week, facilitate this by applying nitrogen as a side dressing.

If a vegetable plant is completely stripped of leaves, it is early enough in the season to replant some crops. Check the days to maturity on seed packages or transplant tags to see if a crop can be produced before the average frost date in early to mid-October.

After hail, plants have numerous wounds increasing their susceptibility to disease. Applying a preventive fungicide, such as copper or chlorothalonil, can help prevent infection while plant wounds heal.

Most perennial flowers recover as their growing points are well protected by stems and foliage. Trees and shrubs will produce new leaves, if needed; however the greatest concern are secondary infections through wounds.

Fireblight in fruit trees and other canker diseases found on spruce, poplars and honeylocust are infections that occur through wounds. These can take a number of years to kill a branch or tree and we are not aware of the infection until it is too late to apply fungicides.

To reduce infections, an application of a preventative fungicide such as copper or chlorothalonil may be more important on trees we susceptible to canker disease. The sooner they are applied the better. Copper may be a better choice as it protects from bacterial as well as fungal disease and fireblight is bacterial.

And here's a reminder to attend our Water Dogs workshop on June 21 at 6:30 PM at 36 Clear Lake south of Columbus to learn about efficient and correct lawn irrigation, along with how do an irrigation audit.

Along with demonstrating how to do an audit to learn how much water your system applies and how uniformly, a variety of topics such as determining when irrigation is needed and the effects of soil compaction will be covered. Extension Master Gardeners will share their experience using soil moisture meters to determine when to water.

This workshop is open to the public and there is no fee to attend. On June 21, come to Clear Lake south of Columbus at 6:30 PM, and follow the signs for the lawn irrigation workshop. For information, call 402-563-4901 or email kfeehan2@unl.edu.