

## Wet Weather Issues

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Abundant rainfall has been helpful to landscape plants, especially shade trees and evergreens that have been drought stressed the last few years. In some cases, wet weather can lead to plant problems.

Fungal diseases infecting shade tree leaves and causing leaf spots or brown blighted areas followed by leaf drop are common during rainy periods. Fortunately, the majority of fungal leaf diseases are considered a minor problem for otherwise healthy trees. While they can create some stress, they are often a cosmetic issue more than a serious problem.

When leaf drop occurs, pay more attention to how many leaves remain on the tree than to how many have fallen to the ground. If the tree has a good amount of green leaves, even if they have leaf spots or blighted areas, the leaves are doing their job of photosynthesis and producing food in the form of carbohydrates.

Fungicides applied at this time of year will have little effectiveness and are rarely feasible on large shade trees. Rake up and discard fallen leaves to tidy the area. Correctly mulch trees and properly water if the weather turns dry to reduce additional stress. As a rule, avoid fertilizing landscape trees.

Lawn yellowing appeared earlier than usual this year. If a lawn is yellowing, avoid applying nitrogen to try and green the lawn. The cause of yellowing is most likely iron chlorosis, due to a lack of iron in the plant but rarely the soil. Applying nitrogen can intensify symptoms as it promotes increased growth in need of iron.

Nebraska soils tend to have a high or alkaline pH which leads to the nutrient iron being less available to plants. High pH is further compounded by root dysfunction occurring when soils are warmer and wet. Conditions we typically see in July and August, when lawn yellowing usually shows up.

Grasses have natural molecules that help roots extract micronutrients, like iron, from high pH soils. This is why we do not see yellowing in spring and it often disappears in fall. It is believed a grasses nutrient mining system slows or stops when soils are hot and wet causing iron to become deficient and turfgrass to yellow.

If yellowing is a common problem on a Kentucky bluegrass lawn, the best solution is to avoid excessive irrigation and allow soil to become slightly dry between irrigations. Core aerate turf in April or September to reduce compaction and promote healthy roots. Foliar applications of ferrous sulfate (iron) can be used to improve turf color.

Tomato leaves rolling or curling upward often increases during heavy rainfall periods. If tomato leaves roll along the length of the leaf but appear normal when the leaf is unrolled, this is physiological leaf roll. It is not caused by disease, insect or herbicide drift.

When tomato plants grow vigorously during spring, especially due to rainfall or excess nitrogen fertilizer, leafy growth can exceed root growth. When temperatures become hot and a well-established root system is most needed, these plants respond by reducing leaf surface area by rolling leaves. This decreases moisture loss from leaves via transpiration.

Some tomato varieties are more prone to leaf roll than others. Keep a record of varieties and possibly avoid those prone to leaf rolling. However, tomato leaf roll is a temporary condition that will stop once plants acclimate to hot weather, develop larger root systems, or have a chance to recover from excessive rainfall or root injury such as deep hoeing near the plant.