

Plant Pests

With the warmer weather, plants begin to grow and look beautiful. Unfortunately, insect pests and diseases also emerge that often must be dealt with at the same time. Some of the more common problems include aphids, spider mites, various lawn pests and even codling moth. What to do about these pests can be very confusing. Common questions include what the potential pest actually is and what to do to control it.

In the past it was common to regularly schedule preventative pesticide applications to keep problem bugs and diseases out of the yard altogether. However, it has been found that this is not necessary, especially when plant health is properly maintained. Overtime, this actually can eliminate pest predators from your yard, cause pests and disease causing organisms to become resistant to multiple pesticides and just make a potential problem altogether worse.

Another thing that we do when plants are having problems to try to improve their health includes automatically watering and/or fertilizing more than usual. This is often times bad because overwatering can cause a plant's roots to rot off. When the roots rot off, they cannot efficiently uptake water and nutrients from the soil. This causes the plant to decline further. Over fertilizing often causes a plant to grow excessively fast and the new growth is in many situations more susceptible to pests.

Instead of using these options, it is best to determine what the problem is and act accordingly. Finding out what is wrong can be intimidating, but many resources are available. The USU Extension service has many fact sheets pertaining to keeping plants healthy preventing or treating pests and diseases. These can be found by browsing the Extension website at <http://extension.usu.edu/htm/horticulture>. If these turn out to not be helpful for your specific problem, plant samples may be brought to the Extension office for further diagnosis and help. If this is done, things such as how long the plant has been in the ground, environmental conditions around the plant, if other plants in the yard are having similar problems, if any pesticides have been sprayed recently and the irrigation schedule should be noted so that a proper diagnosis can be obtained. It is also necessary to bring in a sample showing both healthy and problematic parts, if possible.

Another very useful resource for preventing and determining plant problem in the Utah Pest Lab located on the USU campus. Their website can be found at <http://utahpests.usu.edu/uppd/>. A main feature is that in the integrated pest management section of the site anyone can sign up for weekly email updates that will keep you informed as to what pests and diseases are active in our area. The updates cover things such as lawn pests, fruit and vegetable problems and many others.

On another note, I wanted to give a thank you to all those who participated in the recent community garden service project where much was accomplished. Additionally, many local businesses and individuals have donated much time and effort to the garden. It is much appreciated.