

## COMMON LANDSCAPE PROBLEMS

*The K-State common landscape problems website is a wonderful resource for Kansas gardeners, here is a sample of what you can find:*

**Brown Patch:** Affects many turfgrasses but most severe on tall fescue, perennial ryegrass and creeping bentgrass. Brown patch normally occurs in midsummer and results in the formation of unsightly patches of blighted turf. The fungal disease is capable of killing tall fescue during extended periods of hot, humid weather. Brown patch development can be very rapid; large blighted areas may develop within a 24- to 48-hour period. In light attacks, turf recovers within two to three weeks. When conditions favorable for disease persist, the tall fescue plants may be killed. Disease development is favored by nighttime temperatures above 70 F and by a high relative humidity and/or a thin film of moisture on the leaf surface.

**Carpenter Bees:** Though carpenter bees can attack virtually any wood, including treated lumber, they prefer bare, unpainted softwoods. Carpenter bees are solitary bees, and although capable of delivering a sting, female carpenter bees will only sting if prodded and provoked. Male carpenter bees (which have a menacing habit of buzzing about a person's head) do not have a stinger and, therefore, are harmless.

**Carpenter Ants:** These large, dark brown to black ants can range from ¼ inch up to ¾ inch for a queen. Carpenter ants seek soft, mushy wood to excavate for nests but may move into sound wood as the need arises. They do not feed on wood as termites do but remove what is needed to build galleries in which to rear their young. The sawdust is ejected and forms piles that can help locate a nest. Carpenter ants feed on honeydew given off by aphids, other insects, animal remains and household food scraps. As stated before, they do not feed on wood.

**Chiggers:** Adults are brilliant red, about 1/20-inch long, and may be seen moving slowly about on the soil even on warm winter days. Egg laying begins when soil surface temperatures are regularly above 60°F, and "chigger season" is soon underway. After hatching, chigger larvae climb onto grass blades, twigs, or other objects from which they can more readily snag a passing host. After feeding for two to four days, the larvae drop from the host, undergo a molting process, and become nymphs. Nymphs and adults are not parasitic. They are predators on small insects, other mites and their eggs. A complete life cycle requires from 7 to 10 weeks, but from April to cold fall weather there are always some of the bothersome larvae around.

**Crab Grass:** Crabgrass is a summer annual grass that germinates in the spring and dies in the fall. It proliferates in hot, dry environments. Because cool-season lawns struggle during the summer, crabgrass will often take over if the lawn is not well taken care of. April 15 is a good target date for applying the preventer because it gives the active ingredients time to evenly disperse in the soil before crabgrass germination starts.

**Dandelion:** New plants germinate primarily in the fall (late September). Early November is the most effective time to control broadleaf weeds, including dandelions in lawns. Even established dandelions are more easily controlled in the fall rather than in the spring because they are actively moving materials from the top portion of the plant to the roots where they will kill the plant from the roots up.

**Grubs/May Beetles:** In Kansas, there are two major species of white grubs. The first and most important is the Southern Masked Chafer. This insect completes its life cycle in one year. The second is the May Beetle, also known as the June Bug. May beetles have a three-year life cycle with the second year being the most destructive. Southern Masked Chafers tend to be more destructive than the May Beetle due to greater numbers of grubs produced.

**Henbit & Chickweed:** Henbit and other winter annuals, such as chickweed and speedwell, germinate in the fall but are most noticeable in the spring. However, if chemical control efforts are delayed until spring, their effectiveness is usually very limited. Control is much easier in the fall of the year. Wait until late October or early November after most henbit has germinated.

**Moles:** Though moles spend most of their time underground, the damage they cause aboveground is all too visible. Meandering paths of upheaved soil are evidence of the small mammals foraging for food. Some tunnels may be abandoned soon after being built while others are travel lanes and used for a longer period of time. Even though moles do not feed on plant matter, they can still cause damage by disturbing roots and uprooting small plants. Poison baits fail to work because moles feed on earthworms and grubs, not vegetable matter. Even grub control products are usually ineffective as most do not control earthworms, and earthworms are the primary food source for moles. The best control method is the use of traps.

**Mosquitos:** Adult females lay eggs every third night during their life span in a raft of 100 to 300 eggs on the surface of standing water. Eggs hatch into larvae that feed on aquatic microorganisms. They must frequently come to the surface to breathe. The pupa is a non-feeding, but mobile stage from which an adult emerges. The length of time for the development from egg to adult varies depending on the water temperature and mosquito species. It can take from seven to 10 days, but sometimes up to several weeks. The adult life span is usually several weeks and depends on environmental conditions such as temperature and food supply. Both sexes feed on nectar to gain energy; only female mosquitoes bite and ingest blood, which is necessary for egg production. Females are attracted to the host by sensing carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) from breath and skin as well as host odor, temperature, color, and movement.

**Nutsedge:** Yellow nutsedge is a relatively common problem in lawns, especially in wet years or in lawns with irrigation. Although it looks much like a grass, it is a sedge. Yellow nutsedge is pale green to yellow and grows rapidly in the spring and early summer. Because of this rapid shoot growth, it sticks up above the rest of the lawn only a few days after mowing. This weed is a good indicator of poor drainage, but it can be introduced into well-drained sites through contaminated topsoil or nursery stock. Nutsedge is difficult to control culturally as it produces numerous tubers that give rise to new plants. Pulling nutsedge will increase the number of plants because dormant tubers are activated. However, it is possible to control nutsedge by pulling, but you must be very, very persistent.

**Sowbugs/Pillbugs (Roly-Poly's):** In the United States, they are sometimes referred to as roly-poly's. Both sowbugs and pillbugs are oval or convex in shape, segmented, and are flattened underneath the body. They are black, gray, or brown in color depending on age, and 5 to 8 mm long. They primarily feed on decaying organic matter because they possess weak chewing mouthparts, but they may occasionally feed on the stems and roots of young seedlings. Both sowbugs and pillbugs are nocturnal, actively feeding at night, but can be observed during the daytime after rains or during cloudy conditions. Adults can live up to 2 years or more.

**Rose Rosette:** It is a serious problem in Kansas on wild roses (*Rosa multiflora*) in pastures and hedges. It is also found in domestic rose plantings. Rose plants infected with the rose rosette virus die rapidly, usually within one to two years. Transmission of the disease has been shown experimentally through grafting and is also thought to be spread by mites. Though KnockOut roses are resistant to many diseases, they are susceptible to this one. The disease can also be transmitted by pruning shears. Therefore, disinfect the shears when moving from one plant to another by using rubbing alcohol or a disinfectant such as Lysol.

<https://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/info-center/plant-pest-problems.html>