MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY™ EXTENSION

County Gardeners Extension Express

MULTI COUNTY

JUNE 2025, VOLUME 18 ISSUE 6

Lawnmower Safety

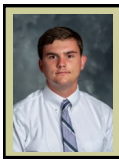
While many people have lawnmowers, using one safely may not be the first thing that comes to mind. Nevertheless, lawnmower safety is critical as lawnmower injuries treated at emergency rooms total around 70,000 per year.

Always inspect the area and clear it of objects such as toys, sticks, rocks, or other debris before mowing. Objects struck by cutting blades can travel at speeds up to 200 miles per hour and cause property damage or serious injury. It is also essential to keep children and pets away from the mower and mowing area, as thrown objects can be dangerous up to 100 feet away or more. Make sure to shut off the blade rotation when crossing paved areas like driveways or roads. Direct the mower's discharge chute away from people, buildings, vehicles, and roadways. Grass clippings can be dangerous to motorcyclists if left on the road.

Keep in mind that a walk-behind mower is designed to be pushed forward, not pulled backward, as pulling increases the risk of blade contact. Mow across a slope with the walk-behind mower rather than up and down, as this minimizes the risk of slipping into the mower or it rolling onto you. Avoid mowing the grass when it is wet, as wet grass clippings can clog the mower or make the ground slippery. Remember that any loose articles of clothing or jewelry have the potential to get caught in the mower.

Handling gasoline safely is also important. Always fill the fuel tank when the engine is cold and before starting the mower. Never refuel or remove the cap while the engine is hot. Safely store the gasoline in approved, labeled containers away from active or likely heat sources.

Finally, taking proper precautions during routine maintenance is essential for safety. Before working on a mower, remove the wire from the spark plug to prevent accidental starts. This is particularly important when sharpening or removing the mower blade. Blade sharpening should be done while wearing eye protection and gloves. Keep the mower clean, as clippings can be corrosive. Remember, despite the safety features built into mowers, responsibility for safe operation ultimately rests with the operator.



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Tomato Diseases

Tomatoes are prone to a variety of diseases caused by fungi, bacteria, viruses, and environmental stress. Among the most common fungal diseases is early blight, which appears as dark brown spots with concentric rings on older leaves, often leading to yellowing and defoliation. It spreads through wind, water, and contaminated tools.

Another serious fungal disease is late blight, which causes greasy-looking dark lesions on leaves, stems, and fruit, and is particularly aggressive in cool, wet weather. Septoria leaf spot is identified by small, circular spots with gray centers and dark margins on lower leaves. Both early blight and septoria benefit from preventative fungicides, good airflow, and mulching to reduce soil splashing. Soil-borne fungal diseases like Fusarium wilt and Verticillium wilt lead to yellowing and wilting, often starting on one side of the plant. These are best managed by crop rotation and using resistant tomato varieties.

Bacterial diseases also pose a threat. Bacterial spot and bacterial speck cause water-soaked or dark lesions on leaves and fruit and are spread by water and contaminated tools. Bacterial canker, more severe, can cause wilting, scorched leaf edges, and fruit lesions resembling bird's eyes. To manage bacterial diseases, it's crucial to use disease-free seeds, avoid working with wet plants, and apply copper-based sprays when needed.

Viruses are another major concern. Tomato mosaic virus (ToMV) results in mottled leaf patterns and stunted growth, and spreads via contaminated tools and hands. Tomato yellow leaf curl virus (TYLCV) causes yellowing and curling of leaves and is transmitted by whiteflies. Managing viruses involves controlling insect vectors, removing infected plants, disinfecting tools, and selecting resistant varieties.

Environmental conditions can also cause problems that mimic disease symptoms. Blossom end rot, a common issue, is caused by calcium deficiency often due to inconsistent watering. Sunscald appears as white or yellow patches on fruit exposed to too much sun, while cracking occurs from uneven watering after dry spells.

Preventing tomato diseases requires an integrated approach: rotating crops yearly, ensuring proper spacing and airflow, mulching, watering at the base of plants, keeping foliage dry, sanitizing tools, and selecting disease-resistant varieties. These practices help keep plants healthy and productive throughout the growing season.

For more information on tomato diseases, visit our website at extension.msstate.edu and download Publication 3175, Common Diseases of Tomatoes.

Septoria Leaf Spot

Tomato Sunscald

Blossom End Rost

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Diseases of Tomatoes

• Fungal	• Bacterial	• Viral
– Fusarium and Verticllium Wilts	– Bacterial Spot and Speck	– Tobacco mosiac
– Early Blight		– Spotted wilt
– Fruit Anthracnose		– Tomato yellow leaf curl

Wilt Diseases

- Soil borne pathogens
- Plants generally affected through roots
- Rotation (at least 2-3 years)
- Plant VF or VFN resistant varieties

Early Blight

- Survives in infected plant debris
- Spores are wind dispersed
- Infections occur first on oldest leaves
- Rotation (at least 2-3 years)
- Sanitation
- Apply Fungicides

Fruit Anthracnose

Buckeve Rot

Bacterial Spot and Speck

Tobacco Mosaic

Blossom End Rot

- Caused by insufficient calcium when fruit are forming
- Results from excessive nitrogen fertilization
- Rapid plant growth
- Drastic fluctuations in soil moisture

Growth Cracks

Tomato Yellow Leaf Curl

Glyphosate damage (Roundup)

Tomato Spotted Wilt

Soil Rot

Garden Calendar: June

Planting

- Plant Crape Myrtles in bloom to be sure of color.
- Replace turf in deep shade with ground cover: Liriope, Ajuga, or Jasmine. Set out Caladiums in shady areas.
- Plant summer annuals: Ageratum, Cockscomb, Impatiens, Marigolds, Sunflowers, Four-o'clocks, and Periwinkle.
- Plant Tomatoes late this month to insure harvest late into fall. Cherry Tomatoes are a choice that are heat tolerant.
- Choose Daylilies now that they are in bloom for planting in your garden.
- Divide and replant Iris, cut leaves back to 6 inches after transplant.
- Plant Zinnias and Marigolds now for a second crop of flowers.
- Plant Snapbeans, Lima beans, Cucumbers, Eggplants, Peppers, Squash, and Tomato plants.
- Gladiolus planted now will give lovely fall blooms.

Fertilizing

- Fertilize Camellias with Azalea-Camellia fertilizer if not done earlier in the year.
- Fertilize Bermuda and Zosia grass. Fertilize Tomatoes, Cucumbers, and Zuccinis monthly with 5-10-10.
- Fertilize annuals and perennials.

Pest Control

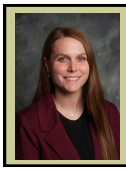
- Mow lawn in the morning to reduce the chance of starting Brown Spot (fungus).
- Remove Zinnias with powdery mildew and replant.

Pruning

- Prune Oleander after blooming ends. Pinch Dahlias and Mums to assure a compact growth habit.
- Remove blackberry fruiting canes after harvest. Prune new canes to encourage side branching.
- Faded flowers should be removed from Daisy, Daylily, and other summer flowers.
- Prune out dead and damaged wood from trees and shrubs.

In Bloom

- Ageratum, Althea, Balloon Flower, Bee Balm, Begonia, Blackberry, Butterfly Weed, Coreopsis, Cornflower, Feverfew, Funkia, Gladiolus, Hollyhock, Japanese Iris, Lily, Nicotiana, Petunia, Phlox, Rose Scabiosa, Shasta Daisy, Sweet Pea, Verbena, Butterfly Bush, Golden-rain Tree, Hypericum, Mimosa, Stewartia, Sourwood, Vitex, Yucca, Jasmine, Crape Myrtle, Daylily, Geranium, Hibiscus, Hydrangea, Impatiens, Lantana, Morning Glory, Oleander, Plumbago, Portulaca, Purslane, Salvia, Veronica, Dusty Miller, Four O'clock, and Zinnia



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Pumpkins

Though it may seem as if Fall is far away, it is time to start thinking about planting your fall pumpkins. In Mississippi's warm climate, pumpkins can be planted all summer as long as they are harvested before the first frost. Pumpkins planted from late June to mid-July are ready to be harvested just in time for Halloween.

When planting pumpkins, choosing a good location is essential for success. The best way to check if a location is good for planting is to take a soil test first. Pumpkins need well drained soil. Sandy soils with a pH between 6.0 and 6.8 are ideal for getting the best yield. Pumpkins should be planted in full sunlight areas to allow for at least six hours of sun a day.

Pumpkins need adequate watering as well. Without watering, leaves wilt and blooms will fall off leading to no fruit yield. Pumpkins are very sensitive to waterlogged soil and can start to die within 48 hours of exposure to overly wet soils.

When choosing a variety, there are several factors to look for. Make sure the "days to harvest" is correct for the time of planting and when you are wanting to harvest. Each variety has unique colors, textures, and sizes.

Make sure to always read the seed package for suggested tips and tricks as well as planting information. For most varieties, seeds need to be planted at a depth of 1-1.5 inches

Pumpkin Varieties for Mississippi

Variety	Size (lb)	Days to Harvest
Mini (<1 lb)		
Jack-Be-Little	<1	95
Munchkin	<1	85–95
Sweetie Pie	<1	95
Small (<8 lb)		
Spookie	5–6	85–90
Triple Treat	6–8	110
Darling	4–5	90
Early Abundance	4–6	90
Small Sugar	5–6	110
Medium (6–15 lb)		
Corvette	10–12	110
Magical	10	90
Jack-O-Lantern	7–10	100
Trick or Treat	10–15	80–90
Autumn Gold	7–10	90
Spirit	10–15	95
Large (10–25 lb)		
Casper	10–20	90
Cushaw	12–18	90–100
Early Giant	16–22	95
Mustang	17	100
Jumpin Jack	18–22	100
Connecticut Field	20+	100
Jumbo (40+ lb)		
Prize Winner	100–300	120
Big Max	50–100	120
Dill's Atlantic Giant	50–100	115

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Some Tips for Growing Garden Tomatoes

The tomato is the most popular garden vegetable. Tomatoes come in many shapes, sizes, and colors. Tomato plants require full sun, moderate amounts of fertilizer, staking or caging, and an insect and disease control program. Determinate (D) varieties are ones that grow to a fixed height and produce all its fruit at roughly the same time. Determinant varieties like Celebrity, found in many garden centers here on the Coast, are gaining in popularity. Indeterminate (I) varieties, like Better Boy, are vining tomatoes that continue to grow and produce fruit throughout the growing season, typically until a killing frost. These varieties are used more widely.

Most tomatoes are set out as transplants, since it takes several weeks longer to harvest from tomatoes planted as seeds. Do not set out transplants too early in the spring. Cool soils as well as cool air temperatures chill plants, resulting in delayed harvest. Set tomato transplants deeper than they were growing in the plant bed, peat cup, or plastic tray; the deeper the better. If transplants have small fruit at planting time, remove fruit to prevent stunting the plants.

Indeterminant plants set out in spring are sometimes maintained through the summer in hopes of a fall crop. With mulching, irrigation, fertilization, and a good pest control program, this is possible, but the fall fruit that develops are frequently small. This results from failure to maintain a season-long pruning program. A second planting of tomatoes for a fall crop provides large, attractive fruit. Start seedlings in June and set plants out in July or early August.

Tomato plants form many branches (suckers) as they grow. It is a common practice to break the suckers out of the plants to encourage larger and earlier fruit and to make the plant easier to tie and spray. Determinate types are not pruned as heavily as indeterminate types, and in no instance are all the suckers removed. You can use rooted suckers that were removed in pruning to start a second planting.

All garden tomato plants, indeterminate as well as determinate, must be supported off the ground in some manner to prevent loss of fruit to rots and sunburn. Wooden stakes, placed at planting time or shortly after, are the most common type of support. Staked plants in a row do not have to be tied directly to the stakes. They can be supported by nylon cord that runs from stake to stake, down the row on both sides of the stakes, and at several levels. This is called the Florida Weave. Wire cages at least 18 inches in diameter are useful for needed support.

Some of the more common problems are blossom end rot (low soil calcium, lack of water), fruit cracking (excess water and high temperatures), sudden wilting (root damage from cultivation or drowning), blossom drop (low or high temperatures, poor nutrition), and sunscald (excessive pruning, no plant support, or loss of leaves to disease).

Tomatoes are attacked by a number of diseases and insects. The most serious diseases are early blight (no resistant varieties), spotted wilt virus (BHN 444 and Amelia are resistant varieties), fusarium wilt, blossom end rot, and root knot nematodes. Regular use of fungicides containing maneb or chlorothalonil controls early blight and several other leaf and fruit diseases. Plant disease-resistant varieties to reduce disease problems. Disease resistance is indicated in the variety descriptions below by a series of letters, V, F, N, and T. The V indicates resistance to verticillium wilt, F for fusarium wilt, N for root knot nematodes, and T for tobacco mosaic virus.

Major insect problems are aphids, thrips, stink bugs, blister beetles, fruit worms, horn worms, leaf miners, and white flies. Visit extension.msstate.edu for more information on growing tomatoes.

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Smilax Vine (Greenbriar)

By this time of the year smilax is growing very quickly. You may have noticed vines sticking up above or tangled all in some of your nicely groomed landscape plants. There are many different smilax vines, some have thorns, and some don't but mostly all of them are a nuisance in landscape, fence rows etc. The female vines will produce small bluish black or red fruit clusters which can be spread by birds. The root systems of smilax can be very extensive some of the species' roots look like a group of potatoes growing in a large cluster. If you have ever chopped one of these vines down you have probably notices how quickly they will grow back especially in older well established vines.

Controlling these vines can be very difficult. If you only have a few young plans the rhizomes or roots can be dug up but when the root system becomes more extensive chemical treatment is necessary. If vines are entangled in your landscape plants the best course of action is to cut the vines off near the soil line and pull out the vines. Use either a glyphosate solution or a triclopyr solution to treat the freshly cut stumps. Using 41% glyphosate you should add 13 fluid ounces of glyphosate and 115 ounces of water making total total mixture one gallon. Using 61.6 % Triclopyr you should add 9 fluid ounces of triclopyr and 119 ounces of water making total mixture one gallon.

Probably the easiest way to apply these mixtures to the stumps is to brush them with a small paint brush. The glyphosate solution is probably a safer option if you cannot avoid the trunks and stems of the desirable plants. If you can avoid the trunks and stems of the desirable plants triclopyr will be more effective on the smilax. If smilax is in a fence row or somewhere where there are no desirable plants, then you can cut plants and wait for fresh new growth to get around 6 inches then spray with one of the spray mixtures mentioned above. Always follow the label when using any pesticide.

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Gas Can Beetles

I recently received a call from a client telling me that insects had poked small holes in his gas cans and wanted to know how to get rid of them. I will admit that I was puzzled at hearing this, but, in true Extension fashion, I went to work researching possible causes of holes in gas cans and quickly found the culprit, *Cnestus mutilatus*, aka Camphor Shot Borer, aka Gas Can Beetle!

Adult camphor shot borer. Photo: Javier E. Mercado, USDA/FS Rocky Mountain Research Station. Bugwood #5477544

The camphor shot borer is part of a group of bark beetles known as ambrosia beetles. Originally from Asia, they were first discovered in the United States in 1999 in the backyard of Terry Schiefer, curator of the MSU insect museum, in Starkville, MS. What are the odds of that?

Why do they attack Gas cans? The simple answer is that camphor shoot borers are attracted to the ethanol found in gasoline. In nature, they are attracted to weak or damaged trees which produce small amounts of alcohol. They damage hardwood trees by boring small holes approximately 2mm through the bark and into the sapwood. After boring a hole into the tree, they then begin inoculating the tunnels with a fungus and depositing eggs. Once the larvae hatch, they begin to feed on the fungal growth.

Carlton, C. and V. Bayless. 2011. **A Case of *Cnestus mutilatus* (Blandford) (Curculionidae: Scolytinae: Xyleborini) Females Damaging Plastic Fuel Storage Containers in Louisiana, U.S.A. The Coleopterists Bulletin 65(3): 290-291.**

How do you protect your gas cans and fuel lines from these "gas can beetles"? Pesticide treatments have not been thoroughly investigated and the best method to protect your equipment is to make sure they are stored in an enclosed shed or under some type of a cover such as a tarpaulin. Removing any spilled gas from the exterior of the container may also help in prevention. Camphor shoot borers are most active from March through June so taking extra caution to protect equipment during this time may save you from some unnecessary purchases or repairs.

Calendar of Upcoming Events

DATE	EVENT
June 4, 11, 18	**WILD ABOUT NATURE WEDNESDAYS** **Family Programs at the Crosby Arboretum: 9:30—10:30 AM. See Flyer on next page for details and registration link. Costs for these programs vary.** **June 4—Make a Pollinator Palace; June 11—Nature Paint a Drawstring Tote Bag; June 18—Make a Nature Palette Art Piece** *****Program registration for all events at the Crosby Arboretum can be found at http://crosbyarboretum.msstate.edu/ and select "Event Calendar."**
June 5	**BEAUMONT HORTICULTURE FIELD DAY** **Mississippi State University's Beaumont Horticulture Unit, 478 Hwy 15 N, Beaumont, MS 39423; Registration and breakfast begins at 8:00 AM. Get the latest research updates on fruit and vegetable production at this well-attended, horticulture event. No costs for this event.**
June 6—7	**NATIVE POLLINATOR PLANT SALE!** **Crosby Arboretum: 10 a.m. to Noon (Members enter at 9:00 a.m.)** **This sale will feature native pollinator plants, including milkweed and other useful and attractive species for your yard and garden. Enjoy browsing these hard-to-find species, and the chance to speak with plant professionals including Pearl River County Master Gardeners who will help you choose plants suited to your property. Free admission. Use our Service Entrance. The sale is on our loop drive. Follow signs to the sale area.**
June 7	**PINEBELT BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION** **Door open at 6:30 PM and the program begins at 7:00 PM, Pearl River County Extension office; Dr. Eddie Smith will be speaking on Bee Forage in Mississippi.**
June 21	**HOW TO GO GREEN IN YOUR HOME AND GARDEN** **Crosby Arbortetum: 11:00 to Noon.** **Learn how to "go green" with Dr. Sherry Bell, Associate Extension Professor of Environmental Education, by making small lifestyle changes that can make a big impact toward reducing waste and conserving natural resources. Sherry compiles a monthly Sustainable Living newsletter "Green Tips for Bulldogs" that provides guidance on a multitude of Sustainable Home topics. Best suited to ages 14 and up. Members free; non-members $6.**
June 25	**TEACHER WORKSHOP! Project WILD: Plants & STEM** **Crosby Arboretum: 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.** **Explore the Interconnectedness of Plants, Animals, and Ecosystems!** **This workshop is for classroom teachers, homeschool parents, and non-formal instructors, and is adaptable for various age groups (elementary, middle, high school) with modifications. Participants will develop an understanding of plant biology and their role in ecosystems, apply STEM principles to investigate plant-related phenomena, develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration skills, and foster an appreciation for the natural world and the importance of conservation. PLEASE NOTE: This class is being conducted at the Arboretum by Mississippi Museum of Natural Science Outreach Educator Sabrina Cummings. Registration is required. The workshop fee is $30, and $15 for CEUs if desired. Bring a brown bag lunch. Sign up with the link in the description on the Arboretum website or email Sabrina Sabrina.Cummings@mmns.ms.gov.**

Wild about Nature Wednesdays at

Family Program

The Crosby Arboretum

370 Ridge Road, Picayune, MS 39466

June 4th 9:30 - 10:30am
June 11th 9:30 - 10:30 am
June 18th 9:30 -10:30am

July 2nd 9:30 - 10:30am
July 9th 9:30 - 10:30am
July 16th 9:30 - 10:30am
July 23rd 9:30 - 10:30am

For more details and to register please see our website or scan the QR below

https://crosbyarboretum.msstate.edu/events-page/2025-06

MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION

MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY™
EXTENSION

Mississippi Pesticide Safety Education Program

Extension delivers new, EPA-mandated training for private pesticide applicators

Applicators who use restricted-use pesticides **are required** to complete a new training to **renew or obtain certification**.

In-person and online trainings are available. Applicators must pay $60 and score at least 70% on the 55-question competency exam.

5 hours of video modules will introduce new

- safety procedures.
- environmental protection requirements.
- pesticide application methods.

Scan here
or visit **http://msuext.ms/dkp8h** to sign up for in-person training or to begin online training.

Online training requires a laptop or desktop computer with a camera, microphone, and valid photo ID. Neither the modules nor the exam is available on mobile devices.

M2478 (07-25)

Pearl River County Beekeepers Association

Date: June 7, 2025
Location: Mississippi State University
Pearl River County Extension Office
835 Highway 26 West
Poplarville, MS 39470

Doors will open at 6:30 PM for a time of friendship and fellowship.

We will start our meeting promptly at 7:00 PM

Speaker: Dr. Eddie M.L. Smith,
Extension Agent, IV & County Coordinator
Southern Gardening Host

Topic: Bee Forage in Mississippi

For disability accommodation, please contact Dr. Eddie M. L. Smith at 601-403-2280 or eddie.smith@msstate.edu

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