

Gardening Problems

Symptoms such as yellowing leaves and slow growth on plants could be attributed to several problems, including lack of water, overwatering or nutrient deficiencies. High soluble salt levels in the soil, due to too much fertilizer, will also cause leaves to turn yellow.

Plant analysis should be done to find the problem. If it's a nutrient deficiency problem, adding that nutrient to the soil around the plant should solve the dilemma.

If your plants lack nitrogen, older leaves will turn yellow, die and drop off. New leaves may be smaller than normal and the plant will grow slowly. Fruit-bearing plants may develop many blooms but no fruit. Leaves will usually mature early.

Phosphorous deficiencies are evident when the leaves of your plant turn unusually dull or grayish-green. The leaves may grow close together on shorter stems, and veins, petioles (leafstalks) and lower leaf surfaces may be a reddish-purple color. The blooms on fruit-producing plants will be fewer than normal, and fruits will be scarce and small.

If the leaves of your plants turn yellow between the veins, this may be a sign of an iron deficiency. The older leaves of the plant will remain green and so will the veins, but the newer leaves will turn yellow.

If you notice leaves that are crinkled or curling, they may need more potassium. Older leaves will turn yellow and scorching will progress from the edge of the leaves to the center. The growth pattern will produce short, bushy branches and stems.

"Little leaf" is another name for zinc deficiency. The leaves on the plants will be yellow and small. They may be misshapen or strange in color. The shoots and twigs will be dwarfed and may die off.

Caution is key when applying fertilizers containing micronutrients. Too much of a good thing can also be harmful to your plants.

When you notice your plants' distress signals, examine the situation. If you can rule out insufficient water supply and overwatering, have the soil tested. The soil test lab will provide you with soil nutrient levels — the information you need to solve the problem.

Can Bedbugs Really Bite

You've heard the phrase, "Good night, sleep tight, don't let the bed bugs bite!"

Did you know that there really are bed bugs and they just might nibble on your toes while you're sleeping?

Bed bugs are small, oval-shaped, reddish-brown insects that feed on the blood of humans, rabbits, birds and other warm-blooded animals. They are about a 1/4-inch to 3/8-inch long and they appear to have a flimsy, crinkly surface.

When bed bugs bite, they cause a small, swollen, white welt to appear on the skin. And the bite is often itchy. You can recognize bed bug bites because there may be small drops of blood on

the sheets and a musty smell that may resemble fresh red raspberries.

Bed bugs are normally found in floor cracks, bed springs, under carpets, or inside stuffed chairs. But don't worry, you can prevent these pesky bugs from making a meal out of you by keeping your room neat and tidy—something you should do anyway! Frequently vacuum the carpet in your bedroom and launder your sheets and blankets on a regular basis. Dust furniture and items displayed in and around your room. By keeping your space clean, you can keep the bed bugs away, night after night!

Ida's Notebook

by
Ida Risser



The end of August means back to school for our grandchildren. Two will go to college and two will start kindergarten. The other 10 are in-between those ages. I started school after Labor Day, but now some children start in the middle of August.

In fact, birthday parties were held in order to miss school days.

This month there will be five birthdays among our grandchildren. Many of them have spent time with us this summer.

My husband and I were recently invited to spend a day at an amusement park. Besides being quite expensive, the shows were entirely too loud for my taste. Most of the attendees were

Skunk Problems?

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — If it looks like someone rototilled a circle on your lawn last night, don't assume you have a strange neighbor.

It may be the neighborhood skunk, said a wildlife biologist in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences.

"Skunks often come into yards to root around for grubs," said Gary San Julian, professor of wildlife resources. "They also get under houses, decks and sheds. We all know the problem with skunks — if they get scared or you harass them, they spray a very disagreeable odor, which is extremely difficult to remove."

Skunk damage is easily differentiated from that of dogs and squirrels because skunks tend to tear up patches in the grass as they search for grubs. Skunks also have tracks with five toes — although the fifth may be hard to see. Skunk droppings are one or two inches long, 1/4- to 1/2-inch wide and often contain parts of insects, skunks' preferred food.

"A skunky odor alone doesn't mean a skunk's still in the vicinity. A dog, cat or other animal may have been sprayed. Depending on wind direction, experts say, skunks can spray up to six, 12 or 18 feet.

The best way to deal with a pesky skunk is to live-trap and move it. No pesticides are registered for use with skunks, and you need to be extremely careful when using fumigants.

Chicken entrails, sardines, peanut butter or fishy cat food all make good bait. Cover the trap with canvas or dark plastic to make it dark inside. This probably makes the skunk feel more secure, and it can't see what's going on. Once you've trapped the skunk, slowly, quietly move the trap at least 10 miles to a suitable habitat where it won't harass another landowner. Set the trap down gently and open the door.

You probably won't get sprayed while trapping, because the skunk won't have enough room inside the trap to lift its tail.

People in Pennsylvania need a trapping license to hunt or trap skunks, unless they are damaging property. Call your local game commission employee or wildlife conservation officer and tell them what you want to do.

If you don't want to get that intimate with a skunk, San Julian suggests calling a wildlife damage control specialist. Your county Penn State Cooperative Extension office keeps lists of specialists registered with the game commission.

To prevent skunks from making dens under houses, sheds or decks, seal potential entries. Sprinkle flour in front of the holes and watch for footprints leaving the area to make sure the skunk is out from under the house. Skunks aren't much larger than a small cat and can slip through 3- or 4-inch spaces.

young people who enjoyed the many rides. Believe it or not, I was glad to come home to the weeds in the garden and flower beds.

We have just picked five bushel of peaches off of one little tree. What to do with so many? We gave a lot to neighbors and relatives. But, even so, I canned peaches for several days.

Another thing that I can every other day is pickles. The five hills that I planted are bearing almost too many and so I've been sharing them with folks who take walks along our road. It is a dead end road and so it is ideal for hiking.

My husband has gone to Penn State Ag Progress Days near State College with a friend and so I stay home and run what seems like a food processing plant. At least I am hoping that we can enjoy the results of our labor this winter.

Skunks are dormant for about one month during the coldest part of the winter. They breed from late February to late March. You're most likely to run into skunks right before the sun comes up and at dusk. If you get sprayed, burn, bury or get rid of your clothes."

Although tomato juice works fairly well, the following new solution washes away "eau de skunk" and other odors. In an open container, mix 1 quart 3 percent hydrogen peroxide, 1/4 cup baking soda and 1 teaspoon liquid soap.

Spray it several times on walls, structures, your dog or yourself, then wash it out. Don't store this solution — use it all up. Hydrogen peroxide and baking soda mixed together produce a gas that can explode in a container.

If left alone, San Julian says that skunks are peaceful and play an important role in the ecosystem by controlling insects and rodents. They're also fun to watch.

But beware: like foxes, raccoons and bats, skunks can carry rabies. "Rabies has reached epidemic proportions in the Northeast in the past 20 years," San Julian says. "Because skunks are nocturnal, they usually stay out of sight during the day. If you see a skunk acting strangely in the daytime, or acting aggressively and coming towards you, stay away from it. Call your local wildlife conservation officer."



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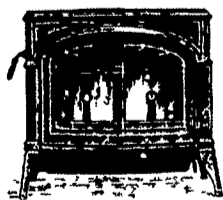
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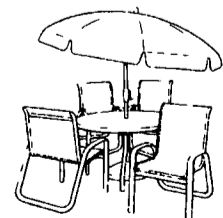
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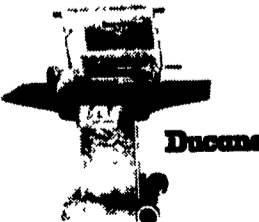
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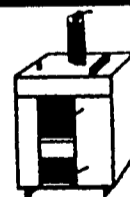
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