

# Jefferson County's Extension Connection

## Horticulture



A tree swallow leaving its nest box near Grant Road in Henderson. Photo courtesy of Karen Soule.

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## WET WEATHER!!

By Sue Gwise, Extension Educator

This spring was certainly interesting as far as precipitation goes! Our Agronomist, Mike Hunter, compiled these rainfall facts for Jefferson County...

- The period of April 1 to May 31 had the greatest amount of rainfall in 61 years- 10.35 inches of rain was recorded at the airport in Dexter.
- There were 20 days in April with rain.
- There were 19 days in May with rain.
- It was the wettest April in 62 years with 5.42 inches of rain.
- It was the 6<sup>th</sup> wettest May in 62 years with 4.93 inches of rain.

These wet conditions led to a delay in planting corn throughout the county. Perennial grass, clover, alfalfa, and soybean plantings were also delayed. Late harvests of grass hay crops led to a loss of quality, and fewer small grain acres were planted due to wet field conditions in May.

On the home vegetable front, conditions were too wet to get many cool season crops such as spinach, peas and beets in the ground. If they were planted too late, yields

will likely be low since these vegetables do not thrive in warm weather. Try planting any missed cool season crops in mid-August for an early fall harvest.

Transplants such as tomatoes, peppers and vine crops were slow in becoming established and putting out good growth. Things began to pick up in mid-June and plants began to look really good! Bottom line: We are back on track, but expect those summer vegetables and favorites such as local tomatoes and sweet corn to be a little later in appearance this season.

Ornamentals are being plagued with various fungal leaf problems cause by the wet spring. Anthracnose of oak, maple and other woody plants is widespread. Symptoms include dried, brown to black areas on the leaves. Look for tar spot to begin to show up on Norway and silver maple in July. It looks just like its name- black, shiny spots appear on the leaves. Apple scab is also ramping up- olive brown areas develop on the leaves of apples and crabapples and the leaves may drop prematurely. All of these problems are mainly cosmetic in nature and don't affect the health of the tree. To lessen the infection next year, rake up and remove all the leaves when they drop this fall and hope for a drier spring next year!

Master Gardeners had another successful plant sale in May. We would like to thank all of the retailers who generously donated to our annual fundraiser:

Casey's Market, Watertown

Critter Haven, Clayton

DeLukes Landscaping, Clayton

Depauville Greenhouse

Five Cedars Greenhouse, Theresa

Hyde's Greenhouses, LaFargeville

Krings, Alexandria Bay

LaFargeville Agway

O.D. Greene Ace Hardware, Adams

O.D. Greene Ace Hardware, Sackets Harbor

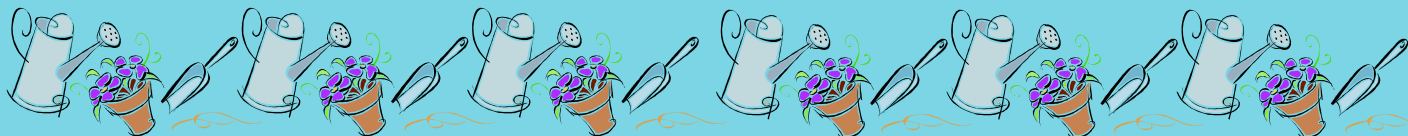
Petals and Pots, Cape Vincent

Seaway Gardens, Watertown

Sherwood Florist, Watertown

Sonny's Nursery, Watertown

Spring Valley Garden Center



## THE BOTHERSOME ROSE CHAFER

By Sue Gwise, Extension Educator

The Rose Chafer is a scarab beetle that is in the same family as the Japanese beetle- and it is just as annoying! This year we are getting quite a few reports of this insect feeding on various plants throughout the county.



The adult rose chafer is tan in color with red, spiny legs. It is usually just under a half-inch in length. The immature, or grub stage, lives in the soil and is not usually seen. After pupating in the soil, the adult insects emerge from the ground in late May or early June and begin

feeding. They prefer to feed on flower blossoms, especially roses and peonies. But they will feed on fruit such as strawberries, grapes, and raspberries. Ornamental plants are not immune from damage either. They will feed on the foliage of apple, birch, cherry, and many other plants. If a preferred food source is not available, the rose chafer will feed on just about any plant.

The adults live for about a month. During this time they lay their eggs in the soil. The developing larvae feed on the roots of grasses and weeds. Their feeding does not damage home lawns or the roots of landscape plants. The rose chafer requires a light, sandy soil for its development - so it's 'range' is limited to those areas.

An interesting fact about the rose chafer is that it contains a toxin with affects the heart of small, warm-blooded animals. Birds, including chickens can be killed by eating the beetles.

### Invasive Insect Update...

In June the following reports came in on invasive insects:

- The emerald ash borer was found in South Park in the City of Buffalo. This is the first EAB report in Erie County. The insect was found in a dense, urban part of the city.
- The emerald ash borer was found in Upper Falls Park in the City of Rochester. EAB was first reported in Monroe County last summer.
- The Asian Longhorned Beetle was found in Bethel, Ohio, which is 30 miles southeast of Cincinnati.

The rose chafer is difficult to control, especially if there are large numbers. If you have a history of rose chafer damage, begin scouting your gardens in late May. Insects can be picked off plants and killed by putting them in a bucket of soapy water. Cheese cloth or row covers can create an effective barrier that can be removed when the insects are done feeding.

If large numbers of rose chafers are present, plants can be treated with an insecticide. Roses, for example, can be sprayed with neem oil or permethrin. Check with Cornell Cooperative Extension for insecticide recommendations for specific plants.

Keep in mind that these insects won't be present all summer. Once egg laying is complete, they will begin to die. So, by mid-July most plants will be able to draw a sigh of relief!

### Simple steps save gas and help you have a healthy lawn with fewer chemicals.

ITHACA, N.Y. - If you want a good-looking yard while protecting the environment, here are four simple mowing practices that can help transform your lawn:

1. Raise your mower blades to the highest setting, or about 3 inches. Taller grass builds strong roots and competes better with weeds.
2. Mow often when the lawn is actively growing. Take only about 1/3 of the grass blade each time you mow to minimize plant stress and maximize health.
3. Leave grass clippings on the lawn. Recycling nutrients in the cut grass back into your soil will reduce your need for additional fertilizers.
4. Keep mower blades sharp, it cuts your gas use by 25 percent. Clean cut grass is stronger and more resistant to pests.

"Our consumer lawn care survey last year showed that many savvy lawn owners are using good mowing practices - *except* when it comes to sharpening their mower blades," says Lori Bushway, Senior Extension Associate in the Department of Horticulture at Cornell University.

The ragged edges left by dull blades turn grass tips brown, making the lawn appear diseased, she adds. A once-a-month mower-blade touch up is all it takes to make the brown tips disappear. But don't wait that long to sharpen if you hit rocks or other blade-blunting objects.

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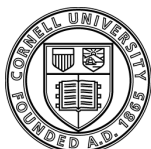
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# *Horticulture Newsletter*

Your resource for gardening, lawn care, vegetables, trees, pests, and more;  
from Cornell Cooperative Extension of Jefferson County.



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