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## Time to Reevaluate Your Garden

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## GARDEN NOTES

# TIME TO REEVALUATE YOUR GARDEN

*By Dennis Hinkamp*

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There are really only two gardening seasons—gardening and gardening catalogs.

The beginning of the second season is also a time when insects or diseases are either killed or are forced into seclusion to wait out the winter. The pain and anguish these caused during the past season is forgotten as we head indoors for the coming months.

One certainty is most pests will be waiting when the weather warms and the plants awaken, says Jerry Goodspeed, Utah State University Extension horticulturist. Controlling these plant pests has always been a concern for producers, farmers and homeowners alike. There is no miracle cure on the horizon, but integrated pest management (IPM) is a strategy worth considering.

“Integrated pest management is the practice of using a combination of techniques to help control pests that afflict us on the farm and at home. It tries to minimize any adverse affects on man and our environment as we control those aggravating insects, diseases and weeds,” Goodspeed explains.

He says the word “integrated” means to use all available scientific means and tactics in a coordinated effort, and not just depend upon one method to control pests. “Management” refers to keeping pest levels to an acceptable standard. A successful IPM program in a home landscape and garden helps minimize damage while reducing pesticide use.

Maybe the most important concept to remember when trying IPM is tolerance, Goodspeed says. “Accept a small amount of damage—especially in the landscape. One aphid or a couple of mites do not warrant major spraying. A few holes in the leaves can also be tolerated.”

This means you have to monitor your landscape on a regular basis, he says. Take note when small problems start to build and may need to be controlled. Record problems and specific areas for future use. Experience indicates that problems and insects strike about the same time each year. Next year's problems will be easier to control if you are aware they are coming.

“Also, avoid plants that are especially troublesome. Do a little research before planting trees and shrubs. Certain plants may look great, but come with a multitude of inherent problems. Aspen trees are a great example. There are numerous bores and diseases that affects them. They are an example of what to avoid,” Goodspeed says.

“Many newer varieties of plants have been bioengineered with a resistance to some insects and diseases. When choosing landscape and garden plants, ask which are resistant to some problems.”

Once you notice a pest, identify it, and determine what if any action is needed, he adds. Research and examine the different options for control. Be aware of beneficial insects and whether they would be an effective control method.

For instance, he says lady bugs, green lace wings, praying mantids, and other insects can be purchased locally or ordered. Their use in the landscape reduces many pest numbers. They will eventually move on, but so do the pests.

Goodspeed says relatively simple cultural practices can make a great difference in the vigor of plants and the care they require. Healthy plants are much better at defending themselves than those that are improperly watered and lack needed nutrients.

“Removing weeds, also helps. Weeds not only compete with desirable plants, but are a congregating and breeding area for the neighborhood pests,” Goodspeed says.

“Once a pest has been identified and it is determined that control is needed, check out all possibilities and options. Many pests can be removed physically, trapped, baited or discouraged using a strong stream of water or soaps. Be aware of all the options for control.”

Still, some pests will require pesticide applications for control, he says.

“When using a pesticide, be certain to follow all directions and rates. Control may only require spot spraying. Why apply an herbicide to the whole yard to control five dandelions?”

Fall and winter are great times to read up on these options for controlling plant pests. Then, when spring comes we are better prepared to deal with new problems, Goodspeed says.

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