

2025 July

July is big for our vegetable growing season. Soon we will be harvesting new veggies and wrapping up cool season ones!

WEATHER

As usual I like to start with the weather. It's important to pay attention to the weather as a gardener. If you are not a weather bug, I like KOB or KRQE local weather phone apps-they are more accurate than the national weather apps. KOB weather app gives for a 10 day forecast instead of most weather apps that give us 7 days, which KRQE does. Both are good. It always amazes me how fast the weather can change here. We did get some 92°F+ record breaking hot days in June which may have affected our tomatoes. More on that later.

Hopefully the monsoon rains will show up in early-mid-July and get things cooler with some rain. As a sidenote, if you haven't seen **Clarkson's Farm** on Amazon Prime, you should watch it. It is a series about a British race car driver who decides in his 60's to become a farmer with no experience and all the issues that come up for him but what most stood out to me is how both gardeners and farmers are at the mercy of the weather. It is a very funny series.

HAIL DAMAGE- With the monsoons come the possibility of hail so be prepared! Protection-There are 3 gardening aids that will help.

1. **row cover**-also called *Remay* can help protect somewhat from hail. Use medium weight (.5) row cover in summer. Not light weight (.4)-shreds too easily in our wind and don't use heavy weight (.9-1.0), which is too heavy in summer and will cook your plants.
2. **hail netting**-Really works to protect your plants. To cover your crops you will need to elevate it over some hoops on your raised beds not directly on your plants.
3. **30% shade cloth**-Provides much needed relief from the intense UV sun and provides hail protection. I now like this best because it lasts much longer than either of the above. I get shade cloth at Johnny's Seeds online.

TOMATO TALK

Right now, some of my tomatoes are starting to blossom and hopefully will set fruit soon. This summer June has been much hotter than normal. **Tomatoes are self-pollinating and won't set fruit at 92°F+.** If the temperature gets above 92°F, the tomatoes drop their blossoms, which is called **blossom drop**. This is a self-aborting act to save itself. But the plants will keep producing flowers and once the temperatures are below 92°F they will set fruit and once they have set fruit, they can handle higher temperatures as our tomato fruit grows. It is only when they are trying to set the fruit that

the temperature is critical. So, let's hope the weather will not get too hot AND the monsoons really come in.

TOMATO BUGS-there are 3 things to keep your eye on. One is here now, 2 will be here soon:

CURLY TOP VIRUS-tomato virus disease- caused by the Beet Leafhopper—small (1/8") devastating green bug for tomato plants. Bites a tomato plant and transmits a virus called Curly Top Virus (CTV). Fatal virus-dispose of plant. It is not contagious from plant to plant.

PROTECTION: Floating row cover only. Cover plant around cage from the very top and around cage to bottom so it is completely covered.

CTV is called a *Vector disease* in that it is spread from insect to plant, NOT plant to plant. The leafhopper 'hops on plant, infecting the plants. Plants start to wilt and leaves curl and underside veins turn purple. It will look like it needs water but in reality the plant is shutting down. It is not contagious to the other tomato plants around the sick one. Dispose of plant. **Take row cover OFF when the monsoon rains come.** The bug leaves the area or is suppressed.

Tomato Hornworms- Be on the lookout, they should come soon.

Large finger size green worm that eats your tomato leaves and sometimes eats part of the tomatoes. Very good at camouflaging itself but look for it to hang upside down on stem and usually on the outer top portion of the plant, not deep inside.

PROTECTION: Hand pick. Can use ultraviolet flashlight to see them at night to pick off and put in a bucket of soapy water to dispose.

Early Blight-fungal disease-Usually appears after the monsoons comes-tomato disease-starts on the lower leaves on lowest portion of tomato plant when water splashes up on the lower leaves. The leaves start turning yellow-green, then the leaves die and this fungal disease works its way upwards through the plant from the bottom and eventually to the top. This will eventually kill your plant but you can control it. This is contagious from plant to plant.

PROTECTION: Trim off all leaves/branches that will touch the ground. Disinfect cutting tools in a little bleach in a small bucket to keep from passing from plant to plant.

Put straw around each plant to protect from fungal spores from getting on plant. Spray with **Monterey Complete Disease control**, an organic Biofungicide/Bactericide.

NOTE: Not all bugs are harmful, plant lots of flowers to attract pollinators and good bugs that eat bad bugs. But here are more harmful bugs:

MORE HARMFUL BUGS

FRUIT TREES

Aphids-Can be on fruit trees and other plants like kale, broccoli and cabbage

PROTECTION: Neem or better is AzaMax. Use a 1-gallon handheld sprayer. Follow instructions. Both come from the Neem tree, but AzaMax does not burn plants, and Neem sometimes does if sprayed in the heat of the day PLUS both will harm bees so **wait till sunset to spray to protect the bees.**

CABBAGE/KALE/BROCCOLI/CAULIFLOWER

Cabbage Looper or cabbage worm- Both are small caterpillars that eats cabbage leaves and anything in the brassica family like kale. The adult is a white butterfly with one black spot on each wing.

PROTECTION: Use Bt as a spray for any caterpillar problem or use row cover over the plants. I use row cover as a physical barrier as well.

NASTURIUMS, EGGPLANTS

Flea beetle-small dark beetle (1/10") that eats leaves-shotgun holes in leaves but doesn't kill plant. It particularly likes eggplants. It should leave sometime in July.

PROTECTION: Yellow sticky traps or row cover.

SQUASH-SUMMER SQUASH/WINTER/PUMPKINS

Squash Vine Borers-an orange body/black winged moth that lays eggs at the base of squash plants. The larvae hatches inside the stem, eats the inside of the stem and kills the plant. One day you'll go out and the plant is wilted and dead. It comes late spring thru July. SVBs literally kill your plants by laying eggs in the stem at the base of the plants, then the larva hatch inside and kill your plant. SVBs leave right about the time the squash flowers blossom come. Protection: foil around base of stem from ground to first secondary vines. Row cover works even better as you cover the whole plant-works as a physical barrier **but** you need take off the row cover off once the blossoms appear because the bees need to do the pollinating for us.

Squash bugs-Not to be confused with the squash vine borer-different bug-squash bugs are ¾ inch flat grey-brown bug that lays rust-colored eggs around stems and underside of squash leaves. Slowly kills plants by sucking the juices out of them.

PROTECTION: Put row cover on **before** the plant produces flowers. After it flowers you must uncover the plant for pollination by pollinator bees. All squash need pollinators while some other plants like tomatoes, eggplants and peppers are self-pollinating. After flowers appear, hand pick off adult bugs and use masking tape or duct tape to pull eggs off stems and underside of leaves. The life cycle of the squash bug is 7-10 days from eggs to nymphs which are small dark bugs with black legs. You don't want to let the nymphs hatch so go out every 7 days and get them early. You can also plant plants that are more resistant to the squash bug.

SQUASH BUG RESISTANT VARIETIES

You won't see as many squash bugs if at all with the following squash:

summer squash-*Friulana*-a yellow bumpy zucchini style of squash resistant to squash bugs that is delicious. When cooked, it doesn't get watery like some summer squashes do.

Winter Squash-I like *Butternut squash*. After growing many varieties of winter squash the reason I like it so much is besides it's great flavor, it also is resistant to squash bugs.

Grasshopper-devours plants. There is not any organic grasshopper bait at this time.

PROTECTION: Clear away all weeds from your beds. Cover completely with row cover.

DISEASES

POWDERY MILDEW

A disease that shows up when the monsoons arrives. A fungal leaf disease-*Monterey Complete Disease Control*, helps controls Powdery Mildew and PM is completely controllable if sprayed early enough. Mostly affects squash and cucumbers (and roses). Spray at first sign of white powder on leaves. Cut off leaves that are affected badly. Spray both sides of leaves. Usually arrives after monsoons arrive. Works better than baking soda (sodium bicarbonate). Potassium Bicarbonate fungicide is good too.

AND FINALLY!

THINGS TO EAT: Mid to late July- If you stop picking any veggie, they will stop producing so keep on picking them.

Beans-for a continuous supply, pick often.

Tomatoes-some tomatoes will be ready to start harvesting. They trickle in during mid-July the come in earnest in August.

Chard-pick outer leaves for a continuous harvest

Kale-pick outer leaves for a continuous harvest

Rhubarb-pick when stalks get bigger but be sure you only eat the stalks. Cut off any flowers

Garlic-Should be ready to pick when the bottom 2 leaves die and the third leaf is starting to turn yellow.