

October 23, 2020

Jody G. Holthaus
District Extension Agent
Livestock and Natural Resources

Jody will not have an article this week.

David G. Hallauer
District Extension Agent
Crops & Soils/Horticulture

Considering Fall Weed Control Programs

After a harvest that didn't provide many 'breaks,' adding fall weed control programs to the to do list might not seem attractive. Can we skip it and just do it in the spring? The henbit or marestail won't get too bad, right? Is a fall weed control program really worth the hassle?

A look back at the University of Missouri study data (complete study available online at <https://ipm.missouri.edu/IPC/M/2013/9/Considering-Fall-Herbicide-Applications-Its-not-just-about-the-weeds/>) suggests fall removal of winter annual weeds via herbicide applications resulted in higher spring soil temperatures than areas with dense winter annual weed infestations. Removal of the winter annuals resulted in soil temperatures as much as five degrees higher in corn and up to eight degrees higher in soybeans. Maybe not a big deal now, but it could be in the spring when we're trying to start planting.

Available moisture was also an issue. The presence of a dense cover of winter annual weeds resulted in soil moisture levels as much as thirteen percent lower in corn and six percent lower in soybeans as compared to clean check strips.

KSU studies (across 14 sites) have shown an average nitrogen uptake from winter annual weeds of about 16 pounds per acre. In addition to pure nutrient losses, they also found delaying the removal of winter annuals until spring reduced N uptake in developing corn plants.

Soybean cyst nematode (SCN) levels can even be affected by the presence or absence of a fall weed control program. Henbit is a strong host for SCN, providing an opportunity for levels to increase. Pennycress is considered a moderate host. Shepherd's purse and common chickweed are weak hosts. We have them all, and they may be compounding the fight you are already in to manage soil SCN levels.

Finally, the Missouri work also found that winter annual weeds serve as alternative hosts for corn pests like flea beetles and some Lepidopteran insects. In soybeans, removal of winter annuals in the fall reduced total insect populations ten-fold soon after soybean planting as compared to areas where winter annuals were left until seven days prior to planting.

We may have an opportunity for fall weed control – and we may not. Either way, start developing your weed management strategy now and give yourself an advantage over the pest issues above next spring whenever you can.

Houseplant Care as Winter Approaches

As day length shortens, houseplant growth slows. That means houseplant management needs to change to match the reduced moisture and fertilizer needs plants have now.

It's pretty easy to overwater/fertilize during the winter, with excess water and nutrient additions damaging root systems. Too much water eliminates oxygen in the root zone, and plants decline. Excess fertilizer burns roots, reducing a critical component of the plant's food factory.

To accommodate slower growth in winter, avoid fertilizing in December and January and only fertilize at a twenty-five percent rate in November and February. Avoid watering on a schedule, too. Instead, let the soil be your guide. Check to see if the soil is moist to a once inch depth by inserting your finger into the potting mix. Water only when the mix is dry.

Cindy Williams
Meadowlark Extension District
Food, Nutrition, Health, and Safety

Enjoying Fall Foods

Like it or not, the fall season is here. I know not everyone enjoys the fall and winter months as I do. At the same time, I have not found many people who dislike the flavors available during the fall. Fall foods have a wide range of flavors. Additionally, several fall foods are what many consider “comfort foods.” Think of all the flavors you love during your Thanksgiving meal. When eaten in moderation, fall food can hold several health benefits. Here are some common ways to eat healthy during the fall.

Fill up on Vegetables

Vegetables are everywhere and full of healthy nutrients. Rethink some of your favorite fall dishes to include more vegetables. Start your morning with a delicious bowl of butternut squash roasted with honey and topped with cinnamon. For dinner, use spaghetti squash instead of spaghetti noodles. You can even double up your vegetables by having spaghetti squash noodles with a garden vegetable marina.

Load up on Fiber

Many fall foods are rich in fiber. Eating both soluble and insoluble fiber found in foods like vegetables, fruits, legumes, and grains, helps us feel full faster and keep the feeling longer. While this is important all year long, it is particularly important as the weather gets colder and less active. Fiber helps us control how much we eat. This helps keep from overeating. Leading to weight gain and spending extra money. An excellent way to start your day with fiber is a nice bowl of oatmeal with fruit. If you want to keep from having midnight cravings, a nice warm bowl of lentil soup should keep you feeling full until morning.

Speaking of Soup

Fall is the perfect time to always have soup on hand. A homemade batch of soup will warm your house, make it smell wonderful, and make it easy to have a bowl of healthy comfort food. Soups, particularly homemade soups, seem to taste better in the fall. It is important to read the ingredient label or watch how many certain ingredients you add. Soups can be heavy on sodium.

Bring on the Warmth

With the weather cooling outside, fall is a perfect time for warm foods. These can be foods that are warm in temperature and/or warm in spice. Soups and warm salads are more common in the fall. Along with warm foods in temperature, fall usually sees an increase in the use of certain spices. These spices are used more in fall because they help you stay warm during the cold season. Spices with “warming properties” are cardamom, cinnamon, garlic, ginger, horseradish, and pepper (ex. Cayenne, Chili, and Cracked Black Pepper). Not only do these spices flavor your food, but they also boost your immune system too.

Nancy Nelson
Meadowlark Extension District
Family Life

Importance of Vitamin D

Do you have a “D” problem? As in Vitamin D? Apparently, many of us do. We get Vitamin D primarily from exposure to the sun.

Vitamin D is important for bone health and plays a role in our immune systems and our resistance to diabetes.

Unlike many other vitamins, there are few ways to get it through foods, unless they’ve been fortified with it. Foods that offer it naturally are certain yeasts and plants, plus oily fish such as mackerel, tuna and salmon. Smaller amounts are found in beef liver and egg yolks.

Foods that are sometimes fortified with it are milk, butter, some ready-to-eat cereals, bread, yogurt and orange juice. Read the nutrition Facts Label. If Vitamin D is added to a food, you will see it on the label.

Winter sunlight from December to February is too indirect for Vitamin D formation in most of the middle and northern United States. Stored levels of Vitamin D drop during the winter months, and experts believe that immunity drops as a result.

To protect your health and avoid Vitamin D deficiency, talk to your health care provider. Many providers recommend a simple lab test. Check on the cost of the test and what insurance covers.

With daylight growing shorter and shorter, this may be the most important time of year to think about how to ensure we’re getting enough of this vital nutrient.