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The Grapevine

My Tomatoes Cracked!!

This gardening year has been unique in many ways. Early on in the gardening season the peppers kicked production into high gear and were doing amazing across the state while the tomatoes were slow to get started. Once the tomatoes did start producing for some gardeners they have been going crazy while others have ended up with tomatoes similar to the photos below. Tomatoes typically crack because of fluctuations in the soil moisture. It's common to see cracks appear right after a heavy rain completely saturates the soil as the tomatoes grow faster than the skin can stretch. Tomatoes can crack in two ways. Vertical splits, such as the photo on the left, along the sides of the fruit, are known as radial cracking and are the most serious. This pattern of splitting commonly occurs during hot, humid weather. Cracking that occurs in a circular pattern, similar to the photo on the left, at the top of tomato fruits, ringing the stem end, is known as concentric cracking. With both radial and concentric cracking, your best option is to harvest fruits immediately, before they begin to rot. Your best bet is to keep the soil moisture as consistent as possible. Happy Growing!



Propagation Techniques: Methods for Multiplying Your Plants

by Chris Stuhlsatz

If you're a plant lover like me, you've probably dreamed of filling your garden with even more of your favorite greenery without breaking the bank. The secret? Propagation! It's an incredible way to multiply your plants, and it's a lot easier than you might think. Let's chat about three of the four (we covered seeds last week) popular propagation methods: cuttings, division, and layering. By the end of this, you'll be ready to start growing your plant collection in no time.

Cuttings

Taking cuttings is like making a clone of your plant. It's a fantastic method for many houseplants, shrubs, and perennials.

Types of Cuttings:

- **Stem Cuttings:** Perfect for most plants; take a healthy, non-flowering stem.
- **Leaf Cuttings:** Great for succulents and begonias.
- **Root Cuttings:** Ideal for plants like horseradish.

Here's how to do it:

- **Selecting a Cutting:** Choose a healthy piece of the plant. For stems, 4-6 inches is a good length.
- **Preparing the Cutting:** Remove any lower leaves and dip the cut end in rooting hormone to encourage roots.
- **Planting the Cutting:** Place it in a well-draining medium like perlite or a mix of sand and peat.
- **Caring for the Cutting:** Keep it moist and provide indirect light. Covering it with a plastic bag can help keep humidity high.



Why it's great:

Produces exact replicas of the parent plant
Faster than growing from seeds
Works for many plant types

But keep in mind:

Needs the right conditions to succeed
Some cuttings might not root

Division

Division is splitting a mature plant into smaller sections. It's perfect for herbaceous perennials, grasses, and bulbs.

Here's how to do it:

- **Uplifting the Plant:** Gently dig up the entire plant.
- **Dividing the Plant:** Use a sharp knife or spade to separate it into smaller sections, making sure each part has roots and shoots.
- **Replanting:** Put the new sections into prepared soil at the same depth as before.



Why it's great:

You get instant new plants
Helps rejuvenate older plants
Ensures identical offspring

But keep in mind:

Can be a bit labor-intensive
There's a risk of transplant shock

Layering

Layering involves encouraging a stem to produce roots while it's still attached to the parent plant. This is super useful for plants that are tricky to root from cuttings, like rhododendrons and certain vines.

Types of Layering:

- **Simple Layering:** Bend a low-growing stem to the ground and cover part of it with soil.
- **Air Layering:** Wrap a stem with moist moss and plastic to encourage roots above ground.

Here's how to do it:

- **Selecting a Stem:** Pick a healthy, flexible stem.
- **Wounding the Stem:** Make a small cut or remove some bark where you want roots to grow.
- **Securing the Stem:** Bury the wounded part in soil or wrap it with moist moss and plastic for air layering.
- **Root Development:** Once roots form, cut the new plant from the parent and transplant it.



Why it's great:

High success rate
Minimal disturbance to the parent plant
Great for difficult-to-root plants

But keep in mind:

Takes time and patience

Conclusion

Propagating plants is such a rewarding and fun process. Whether you're sowing seeds, taking cuttings, dividing plants, or trying your hand at layering, each method has its own charm and challenges. So go ahead, give it a try, and watch your garden grow. Happy propagating!

Insect of the Week- Cicada Killer



The Eastern Cicada Killer is the largest wasp that occurs in the state of Kansas and is a native of the United States east of the Rocky Mountains and down into Mexico. This large wasp can be up to an inch and a half in length and weigh up to a gram. The adults have a rust to brown colored head with a black abdomen with three yellow bands. These wasps are often found congregating in the same areas giving the appearance of a hive however that is simply because they are attracted to the same type of location for nesting. Cicada killers are solitary wasps with the females digging a burrow in the ground and hunting to feed the young. The female will dig up to 4 burrows in her lifetime which can be up to 40" deep and contain up to 16 chambers for young. These wasps hunt cicadas for food and will kill 100 or more cicadas in her lifetime. Females will sting the cicada to stun and kill it then drag it into the burrow and leave one cicada with her male offspring and two to three with the females. She will then lay an egg and the young will eat the cicadas over approximately 4 days before spinning a cocoon to wait till next spring where they pupate and emerge as adults. Control is usually not necessary as the males cannot sting and the females will rarely sting. The nests can occasionally damage turf and small plants but spraying is usually not needed. Spray can be applied directly to the entrance of the burrow if needed but if the adults have left the larvae will likely survive to hatch next year.

Upcoming Events

Garden Hour Webinars:

September 4th- Season Extension in the Vegetable Garden

October 2nd- Evergreens in Kansas

November 6th- Rabbit, Mole, and Deer Mitigation

December 4th- Home Hydroponics

Upcoming Events:

September 14th at 9 am
Plant and Seed Swap at Butler County Community Building

September 29th 12 to 5 pm
Greater Andover Days Master Gardener Booth

October 9th at 6 pm
Houseplant Care at Bradford Memorial Library

Garden Calendar

Vegetables and Fruits

- Continue to harvest vegetables
- Pick apples and pears to store in a cool place to extend freshness
- Harvest pumpkins when the flesh is completely orange and avoid carrying by stem
- Harvest winter squash when the rind is hard enough to puncture with a fingernail
- Plant lettuce, spinach, and radishes
- Remove weeds from garden plantings before going to seed
- Herbs can be dug from the garden and placed in pots for indoor use this winter
- Remove small tomatoes from their vines to increase the late development of more mature fruits

Flowers

- Plant spring flowering bulbs, tulips, daffodils, and others
- Dig, divide, or plant peonies
- Divide perennials, especially spring bloomers
- Remove seed heads from perennials to prevent reseeding in the garden
- Plant chrysanthemums or asters for fall color
- Dig gladiolus as the foliage begins to yellow and air dry before storing for winter
- Clean up garden areas to reduce insects and disease as plants die back
- Enrich soil by adding organic matter such as peat moss or compost

Lawns

- Plant or sod new tall fescue lawns
- Renovate tall fescue lawns by verticutting
- Core aerate cool-season turf
- Fertilize cool season grasses with high nitrogen sources of fertilizer
- Mow turf at 2 to 3 inches and sharpen the blade for a clean cut

Trees and Shrubs

- Plant trees and shrubs, deciduous and evergreen
- Rake up fallen leaves and compost
- Prune broken and dead branches from trees
- Avoid pruning spring flowering shrubs such as lilac and forsythia
- Hand pick bagworms to reduce problems in the future

Houseplants

- Bring plants in before temperatures drop into the fifties
- Apply systemic at the beginning of the month
- Clean, wash, and treat plants before moving indoors to reduce insect issues
- Fertilize before winter conditions arrive and growth slows
- Poinsettias can be forced into Christmas bloom by starting dark treatment of short days



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Plant Swap

Have your houseplants grown like crazy this summer? Did you divide your perennials and now have more than than you need? Bring your cuttings, rooted plants or perennial plant divisions to trade for a new plant!

Location

Butler County Community Building
200 N. Griffith
El Dorado, KS 67042

Guidelines

- Plants must be labeled with the name and care instructions
- Plants must be disease and pest free
- Any type of legal plant is allowed
- All seeds must be labeled for 2023 or after
- Other plant related items are allowed
- Ask before taking a plant
- Bring a plant to share

**September
14th
9 am-12 pm**

Contact Calla Edwards for any questions, more information, or to reserve a table at callae@ksu.edu or 316-321-9660

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