

# What's Eating My Day Lilies?

**Dear Plant Doctor:** Please help me. Many years ago my daylilies grew and bloomed along the border of my carport. This year they did not bloom and the leaves turned partly yellow. I can see very small white insects clinging to the leaves and buds. What do you recommend?



**ANSWER:** The daylily (*Hemerocallis spp*) is one of the most disease- and insect-tolerant flowering plants grown in eastern North Carolina. Leaf spot or russet spot (cause unknown) causes superficial leaf spotting or discoloration, but hardly ever causes plant loss. Flower thrips (*Frankliniella tritici*) have been reported to severely injure flower buds and tips of new growth, eventually causing the flower cluster to wither and die in development. Slugs have been very damaging to the daylilies in my garden but have not prevented bloom.

I must see the damage before positively identifying the problem. You can send samples in the mail or take a damaged plant into the county Cooperative Extension Service. If the horticulture agent is unable to identify the problem, then request the sample be sent to the N.C. State Plant Disease and Insect Clinic. Control will depend on the pest.

**Dear Plant Doctor:** Could you please tell me the proper type, amount, and time to fertilize my red tips? My plants are not growing healthy and I believe fertilization would be helpful.

**ANSWER:** The proper way to fertilize any ornamental or vegetable plant is to take soil samples and soil test!

N.C. Department of Agriculture soil analysis kits can be obtained from any N.C. Cooperative Extension office. If soil tests cannot be conducted, then try 2 to 3 pounds of 8-8-8 or 10-10-10 per 100 square feet of plant bed (evenly distributed under the dripline of the plant) in the spring or early summer. Be sure the fertilizer you use contains slow release nitrogen source. Fertilizer "stakes" also do an excellent job for red tips.

**Dear Plant Doctor:** I have 7 rose bushes and 2 gardenia bushes, and assorted azaleas. What is the best time of the year to cut-back these plants?

**ANSWER:** In general, most roses are best pruned in February prior to bud break. Different cultivars of rose require different pruning, so check your roses before "firing up" your pruners.

Gardenias bloom on new growth. Prune in late winter or early spring before new growth is initiated. Since gardenias are susceptible to winter damage, I usually wait to early spring to assess winter damage and prune accordingly.

Azaleas are best pruned immediately after flowering in the spring. Pruning after July 15 may cut out next years flower buds.

**Dear Plant Doctor:** To bag or not to bag is the question.

I have centipede grass and I am confused about taking care of it. In the past years or so, I have read that you should let your grass clippings fertilize your lawn rather than bag them.

In a previous column you state it is prudent to thatch the lawn. But if I do not bag the clippings, is not it a way to build-up thatch? It sure is easy to mow without worrying about the clippings but again, I am confused. I certainly would appreciate your guidance. Thanks.

**ANSWER:** Don't bag it. If you cut 30 percent or less of the turf height when you mow, then leave the clippings. Clippings do not contribute to thatch build-up when the lawn is mowed properly. Thatch buildup is a function of grass vigor, environmental and soil conditions, pest load and many other factors. Heavy (or improper) fertilization and incorrect mowing height is the most common cause of thatching. Hybrid bermudagrass mowed at 2 inches will thatch more rapidly than hybrid bermudagrass mowed at 0.75 inches.

Bermudagrass, zoysiagrass and St. Augustinegrass are prone to heavy thatching. Fertilize, cultivate, dethatch and mow according to N.C. Cooperative Extension recommendations. I am sending you a copy of "Carolina Lawns," the best lawn management publication in North Carolina. Send a SASE to me for a copy or contact your county Cooperative Extension office.

Send your questions and comments to the Plant Doctor, PO Box 109, Bolivia NC 28422.



## Kids' Graduation

Four-year-olds at For Kids Only day care center pose for their "graduation" picture. A ceremony will be held June 10 at 7:30 p.m. at Autumn Care of Shallotte, where the children have visited twice monthly throughout this year. The children's friends at the nursing home will participate in the exercises. Pictured are (front row, from left) Heather Lafontaine, Bryan Jasper, Mark McClean, Lane Mongier, Ricky Dail, Joshua Phelps (middle row) Erin Lamb, Glenn Hewett, Brandon Cordell, Jeremy Cartland, Lexi Grammen, Chris Todd, Matthew Palmer (back row) Anthony Hair, Caleb Jobe, Paul Clewis, Amber Bennett, Rebecca Lowery, Nikki Zettelmoyer and Emmy Lou Ansley.



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