



Kirby Yard Selected

The Holden Beach Beautification Club has selected the yard of Bobby and Debbie Kirby of 160 Sailfish Drive as yard of the month for June. The yard is landscaped with coreopsis, Gerber daises, lobelia, lantana, verbena, mums, and several varieties of lilies.



Kings Trail Winners

Lois and Keith Curry were May "Yard of the Month" designees for the Kings Trail section of Sea Trail Plantation. Their yard features paths lined with "Johnny jump-ups" and many more plants in beds.

Faithful Readers Respond On Lisianthus Article

Dear Plant Doctor: After reading your article on lisianthus...I copied the enclosed articles for your information. Some seed suppliers, like Thompson and Morgan, still call lisianthus *Eustoma*.



As far as personal experience goes, I grew lisianthus from seed in New Jersey and it was a long drawn-out germination, but eventually a few plants grew to maturity and were just beautiful.

Plants produced purple flowers that looked similar to tulips. I would leave them on the back deck in a pot all through December and they kept on flowering, so I know they are cold-hardy. I have never tested their heat-hardiness, but my sources tell me plants should do fine all the way into Florida. I saw them in many gardens in Australia. —Long Beach

Dear Plant Doctor: In response to your request for information about lisianthus, please find enclosed an article that I clipped — Shelby

Dear Plant Doctor: I saw your request for information concerning lisianthus. I just recently purchased two plants in a garden center in North Myrtle Beach...I am sending you the information tag from the plant. Hope this will be helpful to you. —Calabash

Answer: I have been overwhelmed by readers' kindness in providing information about lisianthus. A brief condensation and summary of the information sent to me regarding lisianthus follows.

According to the reference Hortus Third, the property scientific name of lisianthus is *Eustoma grandiflorum* or *Prairie Gentian*. The plant is classified as an annual or biennial, depending upon cultural practices. I found at least four major seed houses list lisianthus in their catalogs: Park Seed Co. (Highway 54 North, Greenwood SC 29647); Thompson and Morgan, Inc. (P.O. Box 1308, Dept. FG, Jackson NJ 08527); J.L. Hudson (P.O. Box 1058, Dept. FG, Redwood City CA 94064); and W. Atlee Burpee and Co. (Warminster PA 18974). Burpee even featured lisianthus ("The Blue Rose") on the front page of the 1994 catalog!

All sources report that lisianthus is difficult to grow from seed or to transplant, but worth the effort. Seedlings can be grown in a cold frame planted in the fall or in a greenhouse in early spring. Seedling transplant survival is generally low due to an extensive root system.

Plant should be grown in a fertile, well-drained, organic enriched soil with a pH of 6.5 to 7.0. Avoid high-nitrogen fertilizers in the culture of seedling plants, and fertilize juvenile plants with light feedings of 5-10-10

or equivalent fertilizer. Pinch buds from young plants to encourage multiple branching. Provide support for plants when size reaches 8 inches.

Treat sucking insect pests (aphids, whiteflies or spider mites) with insecticidal soaps or appropriate insecticides (e.g. Orthene).

Readers, thanks for all the information!

Dear Plant Doctor: Please find enclosed a sample of a branch from a dwarf apple tree. The branches are dying. The disease starts on the end of the branch and moves toward the center of the tree. My tree is 10 years old and loaded with apples.

Can you give me any advice on what might be causing this problem? Do you know of any remedy? I would hate to lose the tree.

Thank you in advance for your help. —Lamberton

Answer: Your problem is due to fire blight.

Fire blight is a bacterial disease which can severely damage apples, pears and many other plant members of the rose family. Fire blight is a kind of STD (sexually transmitted disease) since honey bees often infect plants during pollination visits to the flower. The disease can also be transmitted by hail, wind or infected pruning tools.

Blossoms, fruits, fruit spurs, twigs and branches are affected, and sometimes the entire tree may be killed. Fire blight develops rapidly when temperatures are 65 to 90 degrees F. combined with humid or rainy weather. Damage appears in early spring when blossoms appear water-soaked, wilted, shriveled, and eventually turn from brown to black.

Blighted twigs wilt at their tips, giving the appearance of a "shepherd's crook." Infected young fruit appear oily or water-soaked, often exuding a milky- or honey-like ooze. The fruit will shrivel, become mummified, and stay attached to the branch.

Only antibiotics will control fire blight, and generally small quantities of Agrimycin or Agri-Step are not available to home gardeners. Fire blight is difficult to control, but

here are three suggestions to help minimize the damage to your tree.

■ Choose apple varieties for new plantings which are genetically resistant to fire blight.

■ Remove all infected fruit, twigs and leaves from trees before

growth starts in the spring. Prune out all infected wood. Cuts should be made 10 to 12 inches beyond the last evidence of the disease. Use bleach (e.g. Clorox) diluted 1:10 with water to sterilize the pruning shears between each cut.

■ Avoid heavy fertilization that encourages succulent growth. Keep watersprouts pruned from the base of the tree, and remove and destroy all prunings promptly.

I am sending you the N.C. Cooperative Extension publication

"Fire Blight of Apple and Pear, Fruit Disease Information Note 3," by Drs. D.F. Ritchie and T.B. Sutton. Good luck.

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

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