Tips on protecting gardens during storm season

K-State horticulture expert shares how to help gardens through severe weather

By Emily Halstead, K-State Research and Extension news service

MANHATTAN, Kan. -- Storm season can be stressful for many reasons, but for Kansas gardeners, protecting their plants is a priority.

With Kansas’ storm season in full swing, Kansas State University horticulture expert Ward Upham has tips on how to protect and recover gardens from severe weather damage.

“We are entering storm season and various areas of the state will likely have high winds, excessive rainfall and hail,” Upham said.

Upham’s recommendations include:

Heavy Rain

“The force of rainfall pounding on the soil can result in a thick crust that prevents seed emergence and partially blocks oxygen from reaching roots,” Upham said. Correcting this issue is as easy as lightly scraping the soil surface after it has dried. Upham cautions deep tiling as it could damage young, tender roots.

Standing Water

“Standing water cuts off oxygen to the roots, which can result in plant damage if it doesn’t drain quickly enough,” he said. Plants can sometimes handle 24 hours of standing water, but hot weather following the rainfall can cause the water to become hot enough to ‘cook’ the plants.

“There isn’t much that can be done about this unless a channel can be cut to allow the water to drain,” Upham said.
Hail Damage

Hail damaged plants should recover quickly as long as only the leaves were damaged. If stems and fruit were damaged the situation may become more serious. “The plant can recover from a few bruises, but if it looks like the plants were mowed down by a weed whip, replanting is in order,” Upham said.

Leaning Plant

“Either wind or water can cause plants to lean,” Upham said “They should start to straighten after a few days.” He does not recommend trying to bend them back as the plants often break easily.

Upham and his colleagues in K-State’s Department of Horticulture and Natural Resources produce a weekly Horticulture Newsletter with tips for maintaining home landscapes. The newsletter is available to view online or can be delivered by email each week.

Interested persons can also send their garden- and yard-related questions to Upham at wupham@ksu.edu, or contact your local K-State Research and Extension office.

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K-State Research and Extension local offices, www.ksre.k-state.edu/about/stateandareamaps.html

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