

Tim Malinich: Still our venerable teacher—but from afar

Sandy Welches, MGV '05

Well, not really that far—just over in Erie County, where Tim is the Agriculture and Natural Resources Educator (ANR). He is a regular contributor to *The Ohio Gardener*, *Ohio's Own Guide To Great Gardening and Landscaping*. Tim was the ANR educator in Cuyahoga County when I became a Master Gardener in 2005. He guided our organization with a steady hand and an immense store of horticulture knowledge.

Tim reported on five topics in the July/August *Ohio Gardener*: Flowers, Trees and Shrubs, Containers, Vegetables and Local Pests. I'm going to share two of them with you, as they contain some *important reminders about what we can do to prevent and contain summer insect and disease problems*.

Flowers

Summer watering will be needed to keep flowerbeds lush, but poor irrigation practices can lead to disease problems. **Botrytis gray mold**, in particular, can quickly destroy thousands of flowers and leaves. The problem starts when foliage and flowers remain wet for a long period of time. The water on leaves allows fungal spores to grow and infect plant tissue. The longer the water is there, the greater the chance of infection.



www.extension.umd
Botrytis gray mold



www.alamy.com
Botrytis gray mold

To reduce disease problems, space plants properly. A thick bed of begonias with overlapping leaves, or geraniums covered with fallen petals, will retain water between the layers of leaves or petals. Botrytis will move in and kill that tissue.

Don't plant too closely. There should be some air movement around and through the bed. **Dead-head flowers before they fall onto the lower leaves.**

Containers

Spider mites are a common problem in containers during summer. As their name indicates they are not insects, but actually tiny spiders. With a magnifying lens, you can easily see their small greenish bodies moving around on the undersides of leaves. Two-spotted spider mites are the most common; they have two dark spots on either side of their back. With large populations you might also see eggs, which look like tiny glass marbles. When spider mite numbers get out of hand, they will weave mats of webbing over leaves, flowers and growing tips.

Spider mites love the heat, so they multiply rapidly during hot dry weather. They suck the chlorophyll from leaves on almost everything, but plants like verbena fuchsia, marigold and lantana can have serious mite problems. Because the mites like it hot and dry, water is one of the simplest cures. A regular high-pressure spray with water (especially to the underside of the leaves) will go a long way to keeping mites at bay. If you choose to use pesticides, remember that mites are not insects, so seek out a product that indicates it controls mites.

