Soybean Cyst Nematode Testing

A 2018 Crop Protection Network survey estimated losses in the U.S. from Frogeye Leaf Spot – one of our most troublesome soybean foliar diseases – at 53.4 million bushels. Two more fairly common diseases – phytophthora and charcoal rot, totaled another 51 million bushels lost. All three of them are fairly 'visual' in nature. We can see when they are causing damage.

One disease issue we can't always see is every bit as troublesome. Soybean cyst nematode (SCN) is a major problem in eastern and central Kansas and across the nation, causing estimated losses of 125.6 million bushels in that same 2018 survey. So even though it's not easily seen, it is an important disease to monitor for on a regular basis to see if implementation of management strategies like variety resistance and crop rotation might be in order.

The best time to test for SCN is right after harvest. Divide fields in to sections based on cropping history or soil type for best results. From each field – or subsection thereof – walk in a Z pattern, collecting 10 to 20 cores from a depth of six to eight inches. Mix the cores well and submit a pint of soil in a labeled plastic bag.

Sample handling is important. Keep samples refrigerated until shipping and send overnight or deliver to the lab to prevent heating during shipping. Bags left in the sun can kill nematodes and skew results.

Samples to the K-State Plant Disease Diagnostic Lab can be submitted through your local Extension Office for $25 plus shipping. Samples sent directly will be charged $34.

For more information on sampling, feel free to drop me a line. You can also check out this short, informative video from our lab: SCN Sampling 2020: https://youtu.be/b6Eo0isI1I0.

Pruning Trees and Shrubs in the Fall? Maybe Not…

As trees take their last gasp before dormancy, it might be tempting to do a little 'trimming' while we can still see some shape. If you are planning to do so this fall, be careful.

Penn State Extension Specialist Dr. Rich Marini writes: 'Based on everything that has been published we can conclude that woody plants do not attain maximum cold hardiness when they are pruned in the fall. Trees are affected more by heavy pruning than light pruning.' So what's that mean for possible fall pruning?

In most cases, we can probably get by with it. Damage typically occurs when we have a sharp drop in temperature before plants are completely hardened off. Hardiness of plants also makes a difference. That means that while light pruning and removal of dead wood are fine this time of year, you may want to delay severe pruning until spring. Watch to see what weather is going to do as well.

What is 'light pruning'? Consider pruning to be 'light' if 10 percent or less of the plant is removed (dead wood doesn't count…). Remember as well that even light pruning of spring-blooming shrubs such as lilac and forsythia will reduce flowers for next year. It's probably best to wait on them until after flowering next spring.