

Fruit of potatoes should be removed, disposed of

Potatoes can grow “tomatoes,” and tomatoes, squash, peppers and watermelons can have blossom-end rot.

Under favorable weather conditions, potatoes produce fruit. These structures are borne on the top of the plant and look much like small tomatoes. (Tomatoes and potatoes are closely related.)

Potato fruits are not edible. They contain a toxic substance, solanine, that can cause illness if eaten. Also, potato fruits should not be saved for seed because progeny does not come true. Rather, remove and dispose of fruit so children do not eat them. If you have tomatoes with a



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- ag notebook

sunken, brown leathery patch on the bottom of the fruit, you probably have blossom-end rot. Though most common on tomatoes, blossom-end rot can also affect squash, peppers and watermelons.

Not a disease, this condition is caused by a lack of calcium in the de-

veloping fruit. It is often assumed that this means there is a corresponding lack of calcium in the soil.

Such is not necessarily the case, especially in Kansas. Most Kansas soils are derived from limestone, composed mostly of calcium. So what causes blossom-end rot? Actually, there are a number of possible causes, especially on tomatoes. Let's look at some of them:

- Tomato tops often outgrow the root system during cooler spring weather. As long as it is cool, the root system can keep up. When it turns hot and dry, the plant has a problem, and water, with the calcium it carries, goes to the leaves and the fruit is bypassed. The plant responds with new root growth, and the condition corrects itself after a couple of weeks.

- Heavy fertilization, especially with ammonium forms of nitrogen, can encourage this condition. Heavy fertilization encourages more top than root growth, and the ammonium form of nitrogen com-

petes with calcium for uptake.

- Anything that disturbs roots, such as hoeing too deep, can encourage blossom-end rot. Mulching helps because it keeps the soil surface cooler and therefore a better environment for root growth.

- Inconsistent watering can be a factor. Try to keep the soil moist but not waterlogged. Mulching can also help by moderating moisture levels over time. So what can we do to help? Do a good job of watering, mulch, avoid damaging roots and watch our fertilization.

However, there are some years that you can do everything right and

still have the condition show up due to the weather. In such cases, remember that blossom-end rot is a temporary condition, and the plants should come out of it in a couple of weeks. You may want to pick off affected fruit to encourage new fruit formation.

On soils that have adequate levels of calcium, adding additional amounts of this nutrient (such as with gypsum) will not help. We have also found that spraying the plants with calcium doesn't work either. The fruit won't absorb it because the waxy surface doesn't allow absorption.

Cemetery more than stones

By Kathryn Burke

The Goodland Star-News
Familiar family names stare up from grave markers at the Goodland Cemetery.

Some are marked with plain black granite while others have imposing monuments and still others simple wooden crosses punctuated with flowers.

Some of that personalization may be a thing of the past, though, as upkeep around some of the more unusual memorials has proven difficult for workers.

At a City Commission meeting last month, Randy Topliff, a member of the cemetery board, told commissioners there were problems with “unauthorized items” at the cemetery. He said benches, statues, plants, toys and other items are being placed around graves, making the plots hard to mow.

He said while board members understand that everyone grieves in a unique way, they need to re-establish rules for what can be put out at the cemetery.

“We don't want to interrupt the bereavement process,” he said, “but where do you draw the line?”

Dennis Bentzinger says the line is different for everyone.

For 12 years, Bentzinger said in an interview later, he has been going out the cemetery to mourn the loss of his 17-year-old daughter, Kara L. Bentzinger, who died in a car accident in 1992 along with another

Goodland teen.

“The people passing the laws need to understand that we've never had a funeral for a dead person,” he said. “It's for the live ones.”

He said he put a metal bench under a cottonwood tree at the grave site for long visits and elderly guests. Bentzinger said he uses the bench to play on the computer while visiting his daughter. He said it's nice to have a place to sit.

Topliff said benches are one complaint for the cemetery caretakers because they are hard to mow around, especially on a riding mower.

Justin Bentzinger, Kara's older brother, said he understands the maintenance concerns, but he would be willing to cut weeds around the items.

He said people should be able to personalize grave sites.

“I do think it's important to customize or decorate areas,” he said, adding that the family buys the plot, so the land belongs to them.

Topliff said the more items that are out at the cemetery, the more it costs to maintain.

“It's a tough one, because it's an emotional issue,” he said.

Dennis Bentzinger said there was a time when adding things to his daughter's grave meant life or death to him.

“There was a day when I would have damn near killed for it,” he said, adding that the items are still

important to him and his family.

“When we're gone, the bench will be gone,” he said.

The Bentzingers aren't the only ones who have customized.

A drive through the cemetery reveals row after row of similar markers until you come on one of those that is decorated with small statues and garden ornaments.

“They've been very understanding,” Dennis Bentzinger said of the people in charge of the cemetery.

Topliff told city commissioners that there have always been rules at the cemetery, but as management has changed, the enforcement dropped off.

He said the board wants to empower the caretaker, Kevin Zimmerman, to enforce the existing rules.

He said when someone buys a plot, they get a copy of the rules and regulations, so people should know what is allowed.

Topliff said while they try to be lenient, the amount of stuff placed in the cemetery keeps growing.

“We're not trying to pick on anyone,” he said.

“My concern is that they use common sense,” Bentzinger said, “that they let us use what the cemetery is there for.”

He said if the rules get too strict, people won't follow them.

“They'll make us break the rules,” he said, “and we will.”



For 12 years, Dennis Bentzinger has been going to the Goodland Cemetery to mourn the loss of his 17-year-old daughter, Kara L. Bentzinger, and he has added things to the gravesite. The cemetery board is saying there are problems with “unauthorized items” at the cemetery, but Bentzinger says their important to the families.

Photo by Kathryn Burke/The Goodland Star-News

20 students receive Henry scholarships

Nearly 20 area students received scholarships from the Pete Henry Foundation, including \$500 scholarships that are renewable for either four or eight semesters and \$750 and \$500 non-renewable scholarships.

Emily Burkett of Goodland received a \$500 scholarship renewable for four semesters, and Elizabeth Blaesi of Weskan received a \$500 scholarship renewable for eight semesters.

Receiving \$500 non-renewable scholarships:

Brewster: Andrie Baird, Paul Flanders, Anne Pinkelman, Amber Searle and Andrea Horney.

Wallace County High School: Joshua Popp, Stephanie Charles, Laura Bussen, Sarah Hill and Jesse Baker.

Weskan: Austin Rice.

Receiving \$750 scholarships: Wallace County: Brodie Williams, Danielle Van Laeys and Reid Rains.

Cheylin: Rebecca Mason.

Weskan: Nolan Cox.

The scholarship foundation was created by Pete Henry, who farmed for many years in the Brewster area. Wanting to help local students to further their education, Henry established the foundation to award academic and technical scholarships.

Self-starting, determined students with leadership and work experience from Sherman, Wallace, Thomas, Cheyenne, Decatur, Gove, Logan, Rawlins and Sheridan counties are encouraged to apply.

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Throw a pie at any bank employee
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