Meet Our Experts

R. O. "Brownie" Brown, is a certified arborist and former owner of **Brown's Tree Service**, selling the business to his son, Troy, in 2000. He is still involved in the business and has been a long-time member of Shawnee County Extension Master Gardeners.

Judy O'Mara, Instructor and Diagnostician in the Department of Plant Pathology at Kansas State University has a Masters of Plant Pathology and Extension Education from New Mexico State University.

John Welborn, Director of the Shawnee County Weed Department has degrees from Kansas State University and Emporia State University. He taught agriculture education for 22 years - mostly at Jefferson County West High School. After teaching at Jefferson West, he served the District as the Transportation Director for 10 years prior to working for Shawnee County. He has served as the Director of the Weed Department since 2014 .

Ariel Whitely, Shawnee County Research and Extension Horticulture Agent, has a Bachelor Degree in Horticulture from Kansas State University, specializing in Greenhouse and Nursery Management. She oversees the Master Gardener program in Shawnee County.

Eva Zurek, Insect Diagnostician, is a member of the Research Staff in the Entomology Department at Kansas State University.

K-STATE Research and Extension | Master Gardener Shawnee County

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Sick Plant Clinic is a free service offered through K-State and Shawnee County Extension Master Gardeners. Bring your gardening and horticultural dilemmas and let our experts diagnose and prescribe treatment for your ailing lawn, trees, vegetables and ornamentals.

COLLECTING PLANT SAMPLES FOR DIAGNOSIS

If you are unable to bring a sample please photograph the entire plant, and a close up of the affected area.
If you do not know what type of plant it is any identifying features are also helpful.

Tree and shrub samples – should consist of a section of twig or branch, with leaves attached; multiple samples that reflect different stages of the problem are helpful

Garden Crops and Annual Flowers – include entire plant with roots intact

Perennial Flowers and Ground Covers - try to dig portion of the affected part (with some roots)

Turfgrass – samples should be six to eight inches across and a couple of inches deep taken at the interface between good and bad grass (with some of each)

Plant Identification – the presence of flowers makes weed or landscape plant identification easier

Insect Identification – insects with all body parts intact are easier to identify

Handling Insect Samples

Fleshy Caterpillars and Worms – place in a liquid tight container of rubbing alcohol

Moths and Butterflies – place in a freezer for 24 hours, then place in a crush-proof box cushioned with tissue paper (never cotton – legs and antennae get tangled up in cotton and break off)

Hard Bodied Beetles – rubbing alcohol or freezing is acceptable

CHECKLIST OF PERTINENT INFORMATION

1. Kind of plant – variety?
2. How long has it been established in its present location? – has it recently been transplanted?
3. Exposure – N E S W - full sun or shade?
4. What is the nature of the soil? - tight clay, drainage (surface and internal)
5. When did the problem first appear this season – was a similar problem experienced last year?
6. Are any other plants in the vicinity similarly affected? Is there a walnut tree in the vicinity?
7. What part of the plant was affected first? Top or bottom, which side?
8. Has there been any construction near the plant? How recently? Have underground utilities been installed or replaced near the plant recently?
9. Is the soil around the plant subject to foot or vehicular traffic that could lead to compaction? Is there pavement near the plant?
10. Have there been any weed killers used nearby? If so, what and when? Has salt or other ice melting material been used nearby?
11. What are the symptoms that have appeared? How have they progressed? Is there any pattern of development?
12. What program of watering and fertilizing has been followed?
13. Have there been any fungicides or insecticides used on the plant? If so, what and when?
14. Is there evidence of mechanical damage to the plant (e.g. lawn mower/nylon cord trimmer). Are stem girdling roots visible at the base of the tree?
15. Are there any suspicious insects present? What do they look like?

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Office