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Pest aside

MITE-MARRED MAPLE UNSIGHTLY BUT ALIVE

By Stanley Rachesky
Entomologist—University of Illinois

Each year about this time, we receive many letters and calls from folks who are concerned about their maple trees. In many instances, the leaves have red blotches covering the underside. This occurs primarily on silver maple trees.

The red blotches are caused by eriophyid mites. These mites do not cause any real damage to the tree and, therefore, there is really no need to worry about them. No control is recommended.

Another maple tree problem is the maple bladder gall. Their unsightliness is probably the most upsetting thing about them. They do little or no damage to the tree.

In general, insect galls do not harm trees or shrubs. They could be compared to a wart on your hand or knee. They're unsightly, but no cause for alarm.

If the galls on your maple tree bother you psychologically, you'll have to wait until next year for control.

Control measures have to be applied in the early spring, when the buds break open on the tree just before they unfold to form leaves. Apply Malathion.

Purple leaf plum trees are now being attacked by the pear or cherry slug. The leaves are becoming lacy in appearance.

The pear slug is small, fleshy, dark green to orange larvae, about one-half inch long. Cherries, pears, and plums are its favorite food. It has a voracious appetite. The insecticide, Sevin, will do an excellent job on control.

Those unsightly webs you see in a number of species of trees along the highways, golf courses, and in your neighborhood, are caused by the fall webworm.

The adult webworm is a moth which deposits its eggs on the underside of leaves. The caterpillar (larva or worm stage) hatches and immediately begins to form webs. The size of the web increases as the caterpillar expands its feeding area.

The color of the caterpillar varies. Fall webworms are found in a wide variety of tree species, but prefer wild cherry. When found on shade trees, the webs are usually widely scattered on the branches. Normally, the tree will not be injured by this insect. However, occasionally the tree may be defoliated if control measures are not employed.

Natural enemies of various kinds help to control this particular insect. Birds, insect predators, and internal parasites attack the caterpillars. Even the eggs are devoured by predators and insect parasites.

Probably one group of control materials you should give some thought to control of the fall webworm is the bacterial spore, *Bacillus thuringiensis*. It readily is becoming available at your local garden center and sold under the trade names of Dipel, Thuricide, or Biotrol. Because it is a biological agent, you'd have no worry regarding chemical residues. The insecticide, Sevin also will do an excellent job of control.

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