

“Leaf Problems Showing Up Now”

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Are the leaves of your crabapple falling to the ground?

Flowering crabapples are infected with a disease called apple scab. The initial infection takes place in early spring on the newly emerging leaves. Now you will be noticing olive colored velvety spots 1/4 inch in diameter on the upper leaf surface. Tissue surrounding the lesions will turn yellow and pucker slightly. Eventually the leaves will fall to the ground.

Control measures need to be taken in the spring when infection takes place. Spray a fungicide such as maneb or zineb on the tree as leaf buds begin to open. Repeat every 10-14 days, spraying the tree 2-4 times. Nothing can be done for the trees at this time. Rake up infected leaves. If left on the ground the old leaves will produce fungus spores, move back to the tree and infect healthy leaves next spring.

Another foliar disease that is quite common this year has been anthracnose. Much like apple scab, anthracnose infection takes place in the spring. Anthracnose infects maples, ash, oak, and sycamore. Damage appears as irregular, light brown areas of dead tissue. Severely affected leaves may drop prematurely. Occurrence of this disease is more wide spread during wet springs. Again, prevention of this disease must be taken in spring, as leaves are half grown. Spray with fungicides such as benomyl, mancozeb, or zineb twice at 10 day intervals.

Leaf scorch is another disorder this year. This is a noninfectious condition that is a direct result of last year's drought.

During the drought and heat of last year, root systems of many plants were damaged. Fine roots were killed and unable to pick up water to supply the tree canopy. With restricted root systems this year, many trees cannot provide enough water to leaf surfaces. The tree reduces the area from which transportation of water vapor takes place. Ultimately parts of the leaves die out protecting the plant from excess moisture loss.

You need not be concerned that this condition will spread to other trees. Each tree responds to its own peculiar situation. Trees that suffered root damage eventually will produce new roots. Be sure they have adequate water during dry times, that they aren't drowned in wet periods, and that adequate fertilizer is provided if needed.

Some trees with root damage may lose branches. Prune these out as they appear.

With a return to a more normal rainfall pattern and moderate temperature, many of the plant problems we see now will repair themselves.

Control Tent Caterpillars Now

by James A. Fizzell

Those triangular webs now appearing in trees are the homes of Eastern tent caterpillars. Tent caterpillars are insects that eat the leaves off of crabapple and other trees in the spring. They have just hatched and now is the time to control them before major damage occurs.

Eastern tent caterpillars, *Malacosoma americana*, hatch early in the spring as the new leaves emerge. They form silken tents in the twig crotches where the colony of two or three hundred caterpillars stay during the night and on cloudy, rainy days.

On sunny days, they climb all over the tree and eat the young leaves. Depending on the number of caterpillars present, these insects are capable of eating all of the leaves off of the tree. The tree will put out new leaves, but this use of stored food reserves in leaf production weakens it, making it more likely to be attacked by borers and diseases.

Infestations are most common on crabapple, apple, and cherry; although ash, willow, maple, oak, poplar, hawthorne and plum are also attacked.

The caterpillars or larvae are black when young, but soon develop a yellow stripe down the back that turns whitish with age. By the end of May, they are 2-3 inches long and come out of the tree to look for a place to form their cocoons.

A couple of weeks later they emerge as brown moths. After mating, the females lay 150-300 eggs in dark brown 1/2 inch long masses around small twigs. These eggs hatch until the following spring.


Clipping out the caterpillar-filled silk tents at night or on a rainy day is the easiest control method. Sometimes the tent can be rolled up onto a stick and the caterpillars squashed. Or strip the mass of caterpillars off by hand wearing a cotton glove. Dispose in the trash or run through a shredder into the compost heap.

Spraying the trees with *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Dipel, Thuricide), malathion, or carbaryl (Sevin) is also effective. If the tree is in bloom, do not use malathion or carbaryl to keep from harming honey bees visiting the flowers.

Rubbing the egg masses off of the branches between June and March will eliminate next spring's infestation.

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