



Can't See the Trees for the Turf


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As a turfgrass manager it is quite easy to overlook or lose sight of woody ornamental plants, especially when the turf is undergoing an enormous amount of stress from diseases, insects, drought, etc. This is even more the case during times of extreme stress like the heat of the summer or cold of winter. Turfgrass typically shows almost immediate (within days to weeks) stress symptoms whereas ornamental plant materials typically don't show signs of stress until several years down the road. For this reason, it is important to pay

attention to potential stresses that impact ornamental plant material. Such stresses include heat, drought, moisture (excess), traffic (construction), fertility (low and high), insect, disease, etc. Proactive monitoring of ornamental plant materials will go a long way to circumventing potential future problems. Make a concerted effort to regularly inspect and evaluate non-turf materials, look for signs of diseases, insects, physiological and physical damage. Also, be sure to water plants appropriately as you do your turf.

From an insect perspective,

wood boring insects such as the bronze birch borer or the linden borer are insect pests that often go unnoticed because the immature life stage (larvae) is the damaging life stage that feeds within the tree, often going unnoticed. Damage from other insects such as Japanese beetle adults or gypsy moth caterpillars are more readily discernible since subsequent feeding occurs damage is obvious.

Regardless of the stress or pest, be sure to regularly and diligently inspect ornamental plant materials for signs or symptoms before irreversible damage occurs. 

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