

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

By Roger Funk, Ph.D., Davey Tree Expert Co., Kent, Ohio

Q: I have a sweet gum tree about four years old. Each year it leafs out and its limbs grow, but the next year approximately one-fourth of the new growth dies, mostly near the lower portion of the tree. What's wrong and how can it be solved?

A: Mail order diagnosis is not a good practice, even with a complete history of the problem, but I do have one suggestion.

Sweet gums are not cold-tolerant, and we have had numerous reports of winter dieback the past two years. The fact that most of the injury is on the lower portion of the tree could indicate frost injury. Protecting a tree from cold or frost injury is difficult. The most practical solution is to plant trees more adapted to the local environmental conditions.

Q: Many of my customers have homes on Long Island Sound where there is salt water. I would appreciate your recommendations as to any periodicals or current publications dealing with this environmental situation.

A: There are numerous articles dealing with the problem of saline soils and the effect of salt on ornamentals. Listed below are a few references that concern ornamental salt tolerance in the New England states. I suggest that you contact your local extension agent. You may also wish to obtain from the Cooperative Extension Service at North Dakota State University their excellent publication, Extension Bulletin No. 2, which explains the problems associated with salt-affected soils.

Salt Tolerance of Ornamental Plants by E. D. Carpenter, University of Connecticut, (Plant Science Department)

Salt Tolerance of Trees and Shrubs, University of Vermont brieflet 1212, by N. E. Pellett

Symposium on Pollutants in the Roadside, edited by E. D. Carpenter, University of Connecticut

Also available is a computer based bibliography about the role of salt in the environment, from the Shade Tree Laboratories, University of Wisconsin.

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