

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

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

Q: I have read several articles recommending fall fertilization, yet some of my clients refuse to let me fertilize their trees in the fall since they say the trees aren't growing and the fertilizer is wasted. What can I tell them?

A: Even though stem or foliar growth may not be evident, the root system of trees can continue growing until the soil temperature approaches freezing. The fertilizer elements are absorbed by the roots and combine with stored sugars to produce all the other necessary compounds for cellular growth and function. Therefore, fall is an excellent time to stimulate an extensive root system which results in a stronger, healthier tree.

Q: I was recently told not to use Casoron on white pine and Norway spruce, but I looked on the label and found pine and spruce listed. Doesn't that mean it is OK to use?

A: You must have an old container. Pine and spruce are no longer on the Casoron label. I checked with Thompson-Hayward, basic pro-

ducers of Casoron, and was told that side applications may cause a buildup of the chemical near the trunk and cause injury to *Pinus* and *Picea* species.

Q: What is the best method for treating chlorotic pin oaks? I have tried several methods with no results.

A: Assuming that the leaves are displaying an interveinal yellowing, the cause is probably a lack of available iron. However, other factors can cause similar symptoms, and if the tree does not respond to recommended iron treatments, other possible problems should be considered. Wetwood, a vascular bacterial disease may aggravate an iron deficiency and prevent satisfactory response to treatments.

Trunk injections of dry or liquid iron salts are the most consistently effective treatments for iron deficiency chlorosis. Our tests have shown ferric citrate and ferric ammonium citrate to elicit the best response of the many iron compounds available. In most cases, the response is improved with soil-applied fertilizer.

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Trunk injections may have to be repeated in a few years unless the soil problem causing a deficiency of available iron is corrected. Soil applications of iron chelate may maintain a sufficient level of available iron and attempts to improve the soil pH are sometimes successful, particularly if the soil is somewhat sandy. If the trees are irrigated, the pH of the water should also be tested.

Q: I would like to use a dye this fall instead of overseeding with a cool-season grass. Can I spray it on just before the grass turns brown or will it injure my bermudagrass?

A: The turfgrass colorants are not phytotoxic to grass if applied according to instructions. However, if you apply it while the grass is still growing, you may end up mowing off the colored leaves. The best policy is to wait until the grass goes dormant.

Q: When is the best time to seed a heavily shaded area in the Northeast?

A: Spring. Seed as early as possible to provide the maximum establishment period before the trees foliate. You could also seed in mid- to late November and let the seed overwinter if the area is difficult to work in the spring. Autumn establishment may be difficult because of fallen leaves.

If the area is too heavily shaded to allow turfgrass growth, you may want to consider ground covers.

Q: I would like to know if liming really helps control thatch.

A: If the pH of the thatch layer is too acid for the optimum growth and activities of the microorganisms responsible for thatch decomposition, light frequent applications of lime will enhance biological thatch control. Although recommendations vary, a rate of one to two pounds of hydrated lime per 1000 square feet every two weeks has been successful.

It should be remembered that, even though the thatch layer is acid, the underlying soil may be near neutral to alkaline and additions of lime could have an adverse effect on soil reaction.

Q: How do you use herbicides around nursery plantings?

A: Read the label and apply the herbicides according to instruction *only* to the plants listed.

The herbicide choice is affected by the nursery plant species, the problem weeds, soil type and the application technique and timing that is best for your particular nursery operation. **WTT**

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