

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

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

Q. Every winter rabbits feed on some of our landscape plants and cause severe injury. Could you please recommend some methods to control this problem? (Ohio)

A. Rabbits can multiply in large numbers from summer to fall and can cause extensive feeding damage to a variety of landscape plants, particularly during winter time when the food supply is limited. You can try one or several of the following methods to overcome the problem.

The best method is to use one-inch mesh chicken wire up to 30" high.

Trapping is effective to reduce the rabbit population by using any box-type trap containing bait such as apple or carrot. Rabbits are active from twilight to early morning and generally hide during the day. Trapping during winter is most effective.

Repellents can be effective. Nicotine sulfate can be sprayed every few days and after rains to reduce rabbit injury. This treatment may injure the plants - watch it.

A mixture of powdered rosin (7#) and denatured ethyl alcohol (1 gallon) can be used. This mixture is kept in a tight container and shaken occasionally; it may take 24 hours in a warm room to dissolve the materials. The solution can be applied in the fall by using a brush on dry trees about two feet above the snow cover. It can also be sprayed with knapsack sprayers.

Another material called "Chew-Not," manufactured by Nott Products Company, is 20% Thiram for rabbit control.

Hot Sauce is sometimes used as a repellent. Preparation of this sauce is very important; therefore, the materials should be mixed in the following order. Fill the tank partially with water. Then add 2 oz. Vapor-Gard per gallon and mix. Add 6 - 8 oz. hot sauce (any brand) per gallon and mix. If these materials are not mixed in this order, the hot ingredient in the sauce does not emulsify properly and may wash off the plant and will not be effective. Use only Vapor-Gard and it should stay in solution for about two hours. Material should be sprayed when temperature is above 40° F.

Q. What should I use to get rid of grass weeds in an established bed of myrtle? (Wisconsin)

A. Before trying to control the weeds you should have them identified by experts. Contact your local Cooperative Extension Service. If you have perennial grass weeds, the best thing to do is to dig them out. If the grass weeds are an annual type, they should be controlled with an application of pre-emergent materials. The following herbicides are labeled for use in a myrtle bed: Betasan, Emide, Eptam, Ronstar, Surflan, TOK. Read the label and follow the directions.

Q. Lawns have been severely damaged this year by dollar spot disease. Can you suggest bluegrass cultivars which would perform well in lawns on the East Coast? (New Jersey)

A. Dollar spot disease can be active during the entire growing season and can become very destructive dur-

ing drought periods. Severely damaged areas may require overseeding.

Reports from Massachusetts indicate that bluegrass cultivars such as Adelphia, Arista, Baron, Birka, Bonnieblue, Fylking, Majestic, Merion, Pennstar and Park have performed well, while Nugget and Sydsport were less tolerant of dollar spot disease. I suggest you use a blend of several of the above cultivars for best results.

Q. Is there some type of dye which can be added to Roundup so that you can tell where it has been applied? (Washington, D. C.)

A. Two commercially available dyes, Rhodamine B and Methyl Violet, have been evaluated for inclusion with Roundup. Neither dye, when sprayed with Roundup onto vegetation, would give an applicator a clear distinction between treated and untreated areas during the time the entire area was being treated. The manufacturer suggests adding a one-half per cent solution of a nonionic surfactant such as Multi-Film X-77 to Roundup. He stated that the surfactant will give treated vegetation a gleam or shimmer which is discernible by the applicator during the application period.

Q. My London plane tree trunk cracks every winter. What causes this, and will it kill the tree? Is there any way to prevent the cracking? (Massachusetts)

A. Trees may suffer winter injury in the form of frost cracks—large vertical openings in the bark and wood extending to the center of the trees. Maple and London plane are very susceptible to cracking. Among other species effected are oak, ash, willow and linden.

Frost cracks may appear annually. On London plane, once the crack occurs, it continues to open each winter and close in the spring. The plant may produce a callus along the edges of the crack; however, wood-rotting fungi may establish in these areas and cause rotting of the heartwood.

It was thought that the cracking or splitting was caused by sudden temperature drops below freezing; but a report from the Illinois Natural History Survey indicates that it made no difference whether the temperature drop was sudden or gradual, and neither was the condition related to lack of moisture in the soil before winter. Old wounds and poor drainage have been shown to favor the occurrence of frost cracks.

Wrapping trees with bands of Kraft paper did not reduce the incidence of frost cracks. One means of protection might be to place and tie wooden boards around the tree, particularly on the south side, to prevent possible cracking in the winter. Where a frost crack is already present, arborists may install lip bolts to prevent the split from reopening.

Send questions or comments to: Vegetation Management c/o WEEDS TREES & TURF, 7500 Old Oak Blvd., Middleburg Heights, OH 44130. Allow at least two months for Roger Funk's response in this column.