

# VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

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

**Q:** I have noticed that sometimes the roots of trees stockpiled in wood chips grow several feet during the winter. Do tree roots normally grow in the winter, or is this unusual? (Ohio)

**A:** Temperature is the controlling factor in root extension of many trees during the winter months if the roots are well aerated and supplied with adequate moisture. The decomposition of chips may provide sufficient heat for root growth during the winter months.

In many angiosperms and gymnosperms in the temperate zone, there is a peak period of active root growth in the spring, often before bud break. The rate of growth and number of roots is reduced during the summer followed by another peak of activity in the fall. The majority of roots become quiescent in the winter because of low soil temperatures.

**Q:** We have not been able to control goosegrass for the past two years. What is the best pre-emergent control that can be applied as a granular application to turf? (Virginia)

**A:** Tests conducted at the University of Maryland indicate that, of the pre-emergent herbicides currently labeled for goosegrass control in turf, Balan and Ronstar provide the best control.

**Q:** What can we use to control algae in a pond which contains fish and the water is used for irrigating plants? (Michigan)

**A:** Cutrine-Plus is registered for fish ponds and, according to the label, treated water can be used to irrigate turf, fairways, putting greens and ornamental plants.

**Q:** I have read several articles that said charcoal could be used to tie up pre-emergent herbicides if you want to reseed with Kentucky bluegrass soon after their application. However, I can not find what rate you should use or how long you have to wait after spreading the charcoal before seeding.

**A:** About seven pounds of activated charcoal is recommended on each 1000 square feet of turfgrass. A new seeding can be made the same day.

**Q:** Could you recommend an herbicide that can be used to control Kudzu along drainage ditches? (Maryland)

**A:** Glyphosate (Roundup) is registered for the control of Kudzu and for use on ditch banks.

**Q:** We have been spraying Diazinon for hemlock woolly aphid without any noticeable control. Are we using the wrong material or the wrong timing (mid-April - June), or both? (Pennsylvania)

**A:** Diazinon is recommended for the hemlock woolly aphid (adelgid), but your timing is wrong. The latest information indicates that a late June spray is effective in the control of developing nymphs, and late

September-early October sprays will control overwintering adults. Severe infestations are difficult to control.

**Q:** Since Silvex is no longer available, is there another herbicide which will control poison oak? (California)

**A:** Glyphosate, under the trade name Ortho Systemic Weed and Grass Killer is an effective substitute. Amitrole also is registered for poison oak control.

**Q:** Are there any approved retardants for turf? (Pennsylvania)

**A:** Growth regulators currently available for turfgrass use are maleic hydrazide (Royal Slo-Gro by Uniroyal) and melfluidide (Embark by U. S. Borax), which affect meristematic activity by inhibiting growth or stopping seed head formation.

Melfluidide suppresses growth and seed head production of turf and many broadleaf weeds by inhibiting cell division or meristematic activity of plant parts with which it comes in contact. It is systemic but apparently does not translocate downward in the plant as readily as maleic hydrazide.

For specific use on grass in golf courses or home lawns, refer to label specifications or contact manufacturer. At the present time the predominant use for growth retardants is low maintenance sites where growth control is a greater priority than sustaining high quality turf.

**Q:** I have several large *Ficus retusa* trees which are constantly covered with thrips. I have tried everything. Do you have any recommendations? (California)

**A:** Cuban laurel thrips, *Gynaikothrips ficorum* (Marcal), were first reported in Florida in 1887. They are found throughout the tropics, wherever *F. retusa* (nitida) is planted, and in the United States they are recorded from California, Florida, Hawaii and Texas.

Adult thrips feed on the tender light-green leaves. A heavy leaf drop may occur at the first heavy rain after an extended period of dry weather. Most species of *Ficus* are immune to infestation, but when thrips become abundant on their preferred or specific host, *F. retusa*, they tend to cause leaf deformation and defoliation of all new leaves.

Orthene is recommended for thrips control on several ornamental crops. Research data from the University of Florida indicate that Orthene provided excellent control of thrips of *F. retusa* for five weeks. Plants should be treated as soon as thrips appear, and repeat applications may be necessary.

**Send your questions or comments to: Vegetation Management c/o WEEDS TREES & TURF, 757 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017. Leave at least two months for Roger Funk's response in this column.**