

# PROBLEM SOLVERS

By Balakrishna Rao, Ph.D., and Thomas P. Mog, Ph.D.

## Pros and cons of clippings

**Problem:** Grass clipping pickup and disposal presents a problem to most of us. I would appreciate your comments on leaving clippings in the lawns. (Texas)

**Solution:** Reports suggest that return of clippings over an extended period of time tends to reduce the turfgrass quality under conditions of intensive turfgrass culture. Clippings should be removed when the blades are too long or they have a high potential for the development and spreading of diseases. Under intensive turfgrass culture, if the plant is growing rapidly, the clippings should be removed.

Turf grown under a low-intensity fertilizer program can benefit by returning the clippings. These clippings release nitrogen to the soil which in turn can be utilized by the turfgrass plant. This would reduce the total amount of nitrogen required by the plant.

If possible, try to use a mower that would shred or mulch the clippings to aid in decomposition.

## Fall webworm fights off controls

**Problem:** There is an awful lot of fall webworm in our part of the state this year. Will it kill the trees? (Indiana)

**Solution:** Webworm has been building up in Ohio, too, over the past several years. To my knowledge, tree mortality has not been attributed to the feeding activities of this insect (*Hyphantria cunea*). By the time the webworms and their webs are really noticeable, the leaves have produced the bulk of the food the tree needs for next year's growth. For this reason late season defoliators are thought to be less injurious to the tree than pests which feed on the new foliage in spring or early summer. For the tree, this is especially fortunate because the fall webworm feeds inside of the tough, silken webs it builds. Once a web of any size has been constructed it is difficult to get insecticides through the webbing and to the feeding caterpillars.

Most people feel that the large webs detract from the ornamental value or beauty of their trees. To these people management of this pest is justified. Just remember that if insecticides are used, they are best applied as soon as the problem is detected.

A cultural control for fall webworm is to prune out the nests and destroy the caterpillars inside when both webs and worms are small.

## Pesticide inventory important

**Problem:** While making an inventory, we found many different kinds of unused pesticides in our storage area. Is there some way we can determine whether they are still good to use or if they have broken down? We would appreciate your comments in this regard. (Michigan)

**Solution:** It is good that you are making an inventory and are concerned about the unused pesticides.

Pesticide breakdown depends on the type of pesticide, its age (shelf life), and the storage condition. The following signs of pesticide breakdown should be checked:

1. Caking of wettable powders or dusts.
2. Deposits in the bottom of containers of emulsions or any separation or different colored layers of the liquid formulations. Cold weather may cause some liquid formulations to crystallize or precipitate out. Warming and agitation often correct this problem.
3. Rust spots on containers indicate humidity in the storage area or some chemical reaction of the pesticide with the container.

If you see any of these unusual signs, you should not use those pesticides. Discard the pesticide following the safe disposal guidelines. Be careful while handling pesticides which have broken down as they may be more toxic. Inventory control, that is purchasing only pesticides which are intended for annual use and using the older pesticides first, will minimize the potential for waste.

## Turf establishment after Roundup

**Problem:** How long does it take for turfgrass to establish that has been seeded into old sod sprayed with Roundup? We sprayed the lawn, waited seven days and seeded. Over a month has passed, and although the lawn turned brown, no new grass is showing yet. (Indiana)

**Solution:** Establishment time will depend on time of year, available moisture, turfgrass species seeded, rate at which seed is applied, and technique of application. Under ideal conditions, the lawn will begin to "green up" in about two weeks after seeding.



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Questions should be mailed to Problem Solver, Weeds Trees & Turf, 7500 Old Oak Boulevard, Cleveland, Ohio 44130. Please allow 2-3 months for an answer to appear in the magazine.