

PROBLEM SOLVERS

by Balakrishna Rao, Ph.D

pH in Florida turf

Problem: What is your opinion on the importance of soil testing the pH value in turfgrass culture and management in Florida? (Florida)

Solution: Soil testing is an important management tool in turfgrass culture. The pH of soil solution determines the solubility and, thus, the availability of nutrients for root absorption. Under excessively alkaline or acidic conditions, turfgrass may not respond properly to a fertilization program. Corrective procedures would depend upon the pH, soil texture and turfgrass species.

Reports from the University of Florida indicates that turfgrasses differ in their adaptability to soil acidity. For example, centipede and bahia will grow in a more acidic environment (pH of 5.0 - 6.0) that St. Augustine or zoysia, which grow best at a near neutral (pH of 6.0 - 7.0) soil reaction.

The following table should be helpful in understanding turfgrass species adaption to pH in your area.

Desirable pH Ranges for Lawn Grasses in Florida

pH 5.0-5.4	Carpet, Centipede, Bahia
pH 5.5-5.9	Carpet, Centipede, Bahia, Italian Rye
pH 6.0-6.4	Bermuda, Fescue, Italian Rye, St. Augustine, Zoysia
pH 6.5-6.9	Bermuda, Fescue, St. Augustine, Zoysia

Alternative to dormant oil

Problem: Usually, because of the weather conditions, we are unable to provide a dormant oil application to a number of our clients' properties before bud break or while the trees are dormant. Is there something we can use for treatment after the foliage begins to flush? Any recommendations would be greatly appreciated. (New Jersey)

Solution: The general recommendation for dormant oil application is two to three gallons per 100 gallons of water. This should be applied prior to bud break to prevent injury to foliage.

Since you were unable to apply this before bud break, you can apply a summer oil-malathion mix (two quarts of oil, plus 1.5 pints malathion per 100

gallons of water), any time from bud break and throughout the season. This will aid in preventing a build-up of sucking insects such as aphids, mites and scales.

CAUTION: Read the label and follow the directions! Reports indicate that plants like sugar maple, Japanese maple, beech, black walnut, hickory, nut trees (in general), red bud, and Colorado blue spruce are sensitive to oil. Dormant oil will remove the bluish waxy bloom from Colorado blue spruce needles when applied during the dormancy period. They will normally produce a new wax coat in four to six weeks. The 'Canart' juniper is sensitive to malathion in the summer oil treatment.

Injury is more likely to occur if the plants are under environmental stress such as drought. Therefore, be careful if you are considering a blanket treatment to all plants on a property.

Although summer oil can take care of a number of pests, foliar application of other insecticides may be necessary, as needed, during the insect activity period to manage the pest problem.

Bird dropping control

Problem: Would you please recommend some chemical or other means of how we can keep the birds from feeding on our blueberries and cherries? Their feeding doesn't bother us, but their excrement creates a mess. We would appreciate your comments in this regard. (New York)

Solution: Blueberries or even the small cherry plants can be protected from bird feeding by covering the plants with nylon nettings. This would be practical if you have only a few plants.

Mesurool 75% Wettable Powder insecticide is a bird repellent manufactured by Mobay Chemical Company and is registered for use on blueberries and cherries.

Read the label and follow the directions for the dosage guidelines. Apply Mesurool using conventional sprayers as a full coverage spray as cherries begin to ripen. Do not apply more than a total of three times per season to repel birds. Do not apply within seven days of harvest and do not graze animals in treated areas.



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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.