

# PROBLEM SOLVERS

by Balakrishna Rao, Ph.D.

## Help for white ash

**Problem:** I have a forty-foot white ash in my front yard. For the last three years, as the leaves develop in the spring, the ends of the leaves will curl up, turn brown and then completely fall off. New leaves then form. This year, the process has gone on longer than usual and it now covers the entire tree. Inside the fallen leaves where the brown portion is, there seems to be a web and some type of critter. Is the white ash worth saving? Can it be saved? What can I do other than to have an expensive spraying of a tree that size? Please advise of your recommendations. (North Carolina)

**Solution:** From the above description of symptoms on ash, it appears that you are dealing with a fungal disease and possibly an insect-related problem. The leaf distortion, discoloration and defoliation you have described appears to be related to a fungal leaf spot or blotch anthracnose disease caused by *Gloeosporium* sp. This disease is widespread in the United States. Areas of leaves, primarily along the edge, turn brown and premature defoliation can result.

Since the disease was prevalent the past three years, if moist spring conditions occur in your area this year, the disease may reoccur. Therefore, consider applying either zineb or Benlate fungicides starting at bud break, and repeated twice at 7-to 10-day intervals to manage the disease.

If the tree defoliates prematurely, collect and destroy the leaves. This practice is usually sufficient to keep leaf spot disease at a minimum. As far as the possible insect problem, it is difficult to identify the causal insect and give recommendations with the information we have now. Therefore, if it happens again this year, send samples to your local extension agents for proper diagnosis and recommendations.

I do feel that it would be worth saving the ash tree and it can be saved from the above disease. Usually, because of repeated disorder and defoliation, the tree will become weak and begin to decline. Therefore, keep this plant under good care by proper watering and fertilizing as needed by soil testing to improve its vitality.

In addition to the recommended fungicides, spraying should help manage the problem in the future.

## Borer control on dogwood

**Problem:** We have a problem of controlling borers on dogwood. Would you please give recommendations to control these? (New York)

**Solution:** Wherever dogwoods are being grown, borers are usually a major problem. Reports indicate that there are at least seven kinds of borers that can attack dogwoods. The most destructive among these are the flat-headed borer, *Chrysobothris femorata*, and the dogwood borer, *Synanthedon scitula*.

To control these, treat the trunk and lower branches with insecticides, such as Dursban, Thiodan or lindane during early May, and repeat applications three times at 3-week intervals. Read the label and follow the directions for best results. Keep the plants under good care by watering and fertilizing as needed to improve vitality.

## Don't stress plants

**Problem:** Last year, we have treated a number of large commercial sites with Embark growth regulator during early spring. To our surprise, its effect did not last longer than three to four weeks after application. To save time, we have applied Embark along with broadleaf herbicides and fertilizer. Do you think this might have affected the result? What did we do wrong? I'd appreciate your comments. (New York)

**Solution:** An application of Embark growth regulator, along with fertilizer and broadleaf herbicides, would be stressful to plants and can affect the result of Embark. Although your approach is good for a time saving purpose, it is usually not done that way. The fertilizer stimulates growth and maintains color, while the growth regulator will do the opposite. Thus, they are working against each other. This would reduce the effectiveness of Embark from six weeks to three weeks.

Ideally, apply fertilizer when the turf is actively growing, wait for two weeks to let the turfgrass grow, then apply Embark to get good results.

## Dry lime application best

**Problem:** We have a problem of maintaining large trees in a zoo area with low pH soil. Would you please comment on how to apply lime to increase pH in this situation? Can we use liquid lime and inject it around trees? (Missouri)

**Solution:** Although not impossible, it would be a difficult job to apply lime around trees. Surface applications of dry formulations of ground agricultural lime and postwatering to move the material would be the best approach. Liquid lime needs good agitation and may require lots of water to get good results. Injecting this around trees is a good idea; however, I am not familiar with any published research on this subject.



Balakrishna Rao is Director of Lawn Care Technical Resources for Davey Tree Expert Co., Kent, OH.

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.