

PROBLEM SOLVERS

by Balakrishna Rao, Ph.D.

The flowers, not the fruit

Problem: Is it true that the insecticide Sevin can prevent fruit development in crabapples? A number of our clients like the flowers but they don't like the fruits dropping on the ground. Can we use Sevin? If so, when is the best time to apply? (Wisconsin)

Solution: Yes, it is true that the insecticide Sevin can prevent fruit development. Spraying the trees two weeks after petal drop and then performing another application one week later would result in considerable thinning of fruits.

If fruit thinning is not desired, delay the spray at least 30 days after blooming.

Aerification and seeding

Problem: We have seeded a number of lawns after aerifying and we are not fully satisfied with the results. In many lawns, even after a full season's growth, bare areas are not filled in yet. We noticed a lot of clumps of plants in the aerification holes. What are we doing wrong? We would appreciate your comments and guidelines for better seeding procedures. (New York)

Solution: Seeding the lawns after aerifying is one of the acceptable ways seeding can be done. This procedure works well if you are using turfgrass seed like Kentucky bluegrass with rhizomatous spreading habits. These plants with underground stems (rhizomes) can grow and spread and fill in bare areas.

If you use turfgrass seeds primarily with bunch-type growth habits, they may not fill in quickly or not at all. This would produce bunch-type growth surrounding aerification holes. After aerifying, it is often a good idea to apply some high-phosphorus fertilizer. Aerification aids in the movement of phosphorus through the root zone.

Another method of seeding is to use an Aero-seeder, which is a slice seeder. With this equipment you can expect better results because the machine slices the ground and drops the seeds in the groove, establishing seed and soil contact.

Pachysandra fungus

Problem: In a number of situations, it was suggested that the material we applied for weed control may have caused yellowing and brown spots on leaves of pachysandra. First, we thought there may be some truth to this, but in checking other unsprayed properties we also found similar problems on the pachysandra. On some plants we found yellowish-orange colored growths on the stems. Now we feel that is a disease. What causes these and what is the best way to deal with the problem? (Michigan)

Solution: The problem and the symptoms on leaves you have observed appear to be a common problem on pachysandra. Volutella blight, a fungal disease caused by *Volutella pachysandricola*, first causes leaf spots with concentric rings. The disease agent gradually moves down to stems and colonizes in the tissues. Large numbers of plants can be infected if moist and humid conditions prevail. Affected areas may look yellowish-brown to black in color. Affected plant parts will have yellowish-orange colored fungal structures and spores.

This disease spreads rapidly under dense cover of susceptible plants. To manage the problem, rake and remove dead or dying winter-killed plants soon after winter and improve air circulation. Then if the area has a history of Volutella blight, apply fungicides like Ferbam, Captan, and mancozeb starting when the new growth begins.

Repeat application two or three times at 10-day intervals to protect the plants. Provide adequate moisture and fertilizer to improve the vitality of the plants.

Herbicide selection

Problem: What criteria do you base a decision on when choosing a turf pre-emergent herbicide? Where else can you obtain this kind of information besides from the biased representatives? (California)

Solution: Richard G. Rathjens, senior agronomist on our staff, listed some of the criteria we use in selecting a pre-emergent herbicide:

1. Species labeled for use (source of information: the specimen label);
2. Formulations available (source of information: supplier);
3. Cost (source of information: supplier);
4. Compatibility (source of information: supplier and jar test);
5. Weeds controlled (source of information: specimen label and university tests);
6. Registered uses (source of information: specimen label).

For information on the best herbicide to use on a specific weed, consult: university turf specialist who has conducted pre-emergent tests, trade magazines, and *Journal of Weed Science Society of America*.



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