

PROBLEM SOLVERS

by Balakrishna Rao, Ph.D.

Controlling weeds along a fence

Problem: Can you recommend some chemicals to control grassy weeds along a fence? We have a mowing service and these areas present a serious problem. In some areas, we do not have any greens at some time, but they may germinate at other times of the year. (New York)

Solution: Several products on the market can be used along fences to manage vegetation. For the problem you are describing, use of dichlobenil should provide adequate control of grass plants. Be careful while applying this material around shallow-rooted trees or shrubs. This is a nonselective herbicide which is root-absorbed and can be applied to soil or grass to achieve immediate kill and long-lasting effects.

Dichlobenil forms a barrier in the soil that affects germinating seeds, shallow-rooted plants and emerging growth of perennial weeds. It can move in the soil 1/2 to 3 in. deep depending upon the soil type. Read and follow label specifications.

Ridding maples of conks

Problem: What can be done to get rid of conks on maple trees at the base? (Chicago)

Solution: The conks you are referring to are the fruiting bodies of *Ganoderma lucidum*, the causal agent of Ganoderma rot. These decay-causing fungi establish on weakened and stressed plants. They cause rapid decline and death of affected trees.

Not much can be done when the conks begin to appear. These fungi establish on wounded sites and cause decay and eventually produce these sporulating fruiting bodies.

Bark trace and remove the fungal structures. Let the area air-dry. Then, if the decay area is small, apply fungicide to avert fungal growth and use some latex base paint to cover the exposed area. Large cavities can be filled with proper cavity-filling compounds. Fertilize and water as needed to help improve plant vitality.

Equipment cleaning procedure

Problem: What is the proper procedure for cleaning spray equipment after using non-selective herbicides such as Roundup? (Pennsylvania)

Solution: The herbicide handbook of the Weed Science of America (Third Edition, 1974) suggests a thorough flushing with several changes of clean water. This should be done soon after herbicide use. It is important to clean the tank, pump and hoses.

If this cleaning is not sufficient, for further cleaning fill the spray tank with 1/2 cup of household ammonia per gallon of water and spray the area through the delivery system including the gun, hose and nozzle. Let the solution stand in the tank overnight

and then empty the tank. Rinse the tank twice, allowing the clean solution to circulate through the entire spray system.

Falling skeletonizer larvae

Problem: We are seeing a large number of oak leaf skeletonizer larvae falling down from trees. Clients are upset. We have used Sevin in the past around June and again in August every year. Can we spray in late September-October, and will there be any benefit? (Ohio)

Solution: The product and timing should have controlled this problem. It is possible that your treatment took care of those pests actively feeding at the time of spraying. The properties might have been reinfested by the oak leaf skeletonizer from nearby untreated properties or adjacent wooded areas.

Although difficult, to be effective it is important to practice a community-wide management program for oak leaf skeletonizer problems.

As far as spraying in late September, this would not be much help in management because soon they will be pupating and there is not enough time for another generation. If anything, spray may affect some larvae which may be still feeding. Since the damage is seen on mature leaves later in the season and these leaves will be falling off in a few weeks, there is no need for any treatment now. However, make a note of these properties and sign them up for next year's management program.

Protecting from erosion

Problem: How do you establish a temporary (six months to one year) ground cover under a shaded and sloped wooded lot? What can we use? We want to protect the ground from soil erosion. In the future we would like to use this area for landscaping. (Virginia)

Solution: For a quick and temporary ground cover establishment, use either tall fescue or annual ryegrass. Tall fescue will be more shade tolerant. Non-certified seeds of tall fescue can also be used. Prior to landscaping, use Roundup to kill these and then go ahead with landscaping.



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