

# PROBLEM MANAGEMENT

by Balakrishna Rao, Ph.D.

## Controlling nutsedge

**Problem:** *Is there any weed control that will stop nutsedge? (Texas)*

**Solution:** In response to an answer in the June 1988 issue of *Landscape Management* concerning managing nutsedge in Texas, I appreciate receiving the following comments by Greg Richards of Lesco:

"Lesco Image herbicide is registered for nutsedge control. Image alone at a one quart/acre or Image + MSMA are by far the leading measures of control for nutsedge in Texas. Image is labeled for use on warm-season turf, so it is not used in the tall fescue market in Texas. It specifically controls purple nutsedge. Basagran is mainly for meadows. Most nutsedge in the south is purple, although some yellow nutsedge does exist in northern Texas."

It is important to read and follow label specifications. Image label information suggests the following: "Image can be used to manage several weeds in established warm-season turfgrasses, such as Bermudagrass, centipedegrass, St. Augustinegrass and zoysiagrass. Actively growing weeds are easy to manage. Treated turfgrass may have a compacted growth habit and may inhibit seed head development without affecting its vigor. Avoid drift onto nearby desirable plants like vegetables, flowers or ornamental plants. The label recommends the use of a spray indicator dye such as Lesco Tracker to prevent overlaps."

Refer to the label specifications for further details on other precautions and uses.

## Closing the door on beetles

**Problem:** *A number of our clients are concerned about elm leaf beetle adults moving inside the house now. Our question is why are they entering houses and would they cause any injury? How do you get rid of them? We have been using Sevin in the past. (PA)*

**Solution:** Adult elm leaf beetles tend to move inside houses, garages, under shingles, or other protected sites indoors or outdoors for overwintering. These insects often become a nuisance during autumn. Another reason may be because of excessive heat outside. These, as well as some other insects, may enter houses where there is a cooler environment.

To manage the pests, an understanding of their life history would be useful. Overwintering adults fly back to elm trees in spring from adjacent protected sites and feed on expanding elm leaves. Their feeding causes small, irregular holes on leaves. Each female can produce 600 to 800 eggs on leaves. Eggs hatch into tiny, black, grub-like larvae which feed on only lower sides of leaves and skeletonize them. As the larvae mature they become green to yellow with lateral black stripes. Affected foliage will turn brown, and the tree may produce a new flush of leaves which may also be eaten by the larvae. This extensive feeding activity by the adults and larvae year after year can cause the plant to become more susceptible to other disorders and/or eventually kill it.

After completing the feeding period, larvae move down along the branches and pupate on the ground at the base of the tree or on cracks, etc. These become adults in a week or two and return to the same tree or other elm trees for laying eggs. In the late summer and fall, adult beetles move out of elm trees and search for suitable sites for overwintering.

The insecticide Sevin you have been using is recommended along with several others. Sevin should provide adequate control. Make sure to treat when larvae first appear, when leaves are about fully expanded and again in July. If your clients are concerned about the pests inside houses, a trained pest control operator can give the proper advice and control.

## The best time to dethatch

**Problem:** *When is the best time to dethatch and topdress a football field? We are interested in this service and would be dealing with warm-season turfgrasses, like Bermudagrass, in the South and cool-season turfgrasses in the North. We would appreciate your comments. (North Carolina)*

**Solution:** Generally, more than 1/2 inch of thatch is considered to be potentially detrimental to the turfgrass culture and quality. However, experts dealing with athletic field management consider about one inch of thatch desirable on a football field. If the thatch layer exceeds the desirable thickness, dethatch cool-season grasses in early fall while they are still growing. If this operation interferes with ball games, then consider doing it in spring. Warm-season grasses, like Bermudagrass, can be dethatched in the spring just before greenup.

After dethatching, topdress the area with the same soil type or 100 percent sand. Do not use organic matter on a sand-based ball field. Organic materials will seal the field in time and will cause poor water movement, resulting in surface water accumulation. If there is a problem of standing water, consider improving the drainage by installing vertical or French drainage systems.



Balakrishna Rao is Manager of Technical Resources for the Davey Tree Co., Kent, Ohio.

Questions should be mailed to Problem Management, *LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT*, 7500 Old Oak Boulevard, Cleveland, OH 44130. Please allow 2-3 months for an answer to appear in the magazine.