

# PROBLEM MANAGEMENT

by Balakrishna Rao, Ph.D.

## No bark vs. chem studies

**Problem:** *Have there been any studies published comparing the cost of edging with bark vs. chemical controls? (California)*

**Solution:** I am not familiar with any published data comparing the effectiveness of edging with bark or chemical controls. However, the following discussion might be helpful in considering these practices for edging problems.

Edging is generally done around flower beds or where turfgrass meets the concrete sidewalk, driveway, etc. In these situations, most professional landscape managers prefer to use either a string trimmer or mechanical power edger. In some situations, a non-selective herbicide such as Roundup is used.

Roundup should be used carefully since it will kill any vegetation upon contact. Some professionals like to use Monsanto's Expedite system with a long wand, which allows good trimming and edging near difficult areas. This system may not be suitable around highly visible quality turf because the treated area will brown out with dead turfgrass, which could be objectionable. In these situations, the string or power edger would be desirable.

## Maintaining soil structure

**Problem:** *Will the carrier Balan or Ronstar G change to soil pH or structure? (California)*

**Solution:** No. Representatives from Elanco Company, the manufacturer of Balan, and Rhone-Poulenc, the manufacturer of Ronstar-G, indicate that this product does not change soil pH or structure.

I also believe that if the products are applied to the label specifications, there should not be any adverse effects on soil property.

## Late-season fertilization

**Problem:** *My late-season fertilizing program consisted of a granular application of 32-3-10 with a water insoluble percentage of 7.7 percent nitrogen at a rate of 1.5 AI/acre. With the exception of a very cold December, we had a very mild winter with an abundance of rainfall. I am concerned that the turf's protein and carbohydrate reserves are depleted and that normal spring green-up and root growth will be reduced. Could this happen and, if it does, would I have to make a supplemental application in early spring to make up for the lost nitrogen? (Ohio)*

**Solution:** Even though we have experienced above-normal temperatures during February this year, lawns are still dormant because soil temperature didn't stabilize above 50°. Also, even though we had high temperature days, it was not enough to stimulate leaf growth.

Based on temperature extremes experienced in your area, I don't think it's necessary to provide a

supplemental application in early spring to make up for the nitrogen loss due to leaching and/or plant use.

It is not advisable to provide an early spring application of nitrogen, particularly since you fertilized late in the season. This application would stimulate a lot of leaf growth in the spring as dormancy breaks.

After checking the condition of the turf in spring, apply whatever low rates of fertilizers you feel you need for green-up.

## Keeping large plants mobile

**Problem:** *I work in a large office building in which we have approximately 75 large plants along a main concourse, each weighing about 200 lbs. The concourse is used at least twice a month for various activities and plants must be removed each time. It's a long, hard process because of the weight and height of the plants. Is there a method or type of container that would make this job easier? (Ontario, Canada)*

**Solution:** I can see where transporting such large plants would be time consuming and laborious. There are a number of containers designed for easy moving, including ones with recessed bottoms to fit casters.

If your containers have flat bottoms, casters may not fit underneath and slip off. Since casters under a recessed container are not obvious, they could be left in place.

Take care to select casters for the weight you are dealing with, which is generally based on the container's diameter. Each caster would hold approximately 50 lbs.

Another solution would be for you to make your own platforms with heavy-duty wheels to place and secure the plants in position during frequent moving operations.

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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.