

ASK THE EXPERT

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Choosing the right chain saw

Problem: The Florida Department of Transportation would like your assistance in locating a supplier/manufacture of an electric-powered chain saw for use in overhead limb trimming. We have specs for air, hydraulic and gasoline-powered equipment, but would like to have a demonstration of an electric-powered saw. (Florida)

Solution: Greg Mazur, Davey's technical advisor for utility services, says Homelite and Stihl have light-duty electric chain saws.

Homelite has models EL12 and EL14; Stihl has models E14 and E20. The numbers indicate bar length. Mazur also says Sears carries the Craftsman line of electric chain saws. Contact local dealers for demonstration.

Electric-powered chain saws will not be very practical for overhead limb trimming. If not impractical, it would be very difficult and unsafe to have electrical cords attached to the saws and power source. The saws on the market require some sort of power source either from nearby buildings and/or mobile generators. I have not seen cordless electric saws designed for pruning.

Drain tube not a bacterial cure

Problem: Does the drain tube cure wet wood bacteria? (Pennsylvania)

Solution: Installing the drain tube does not cure the bacterial problem. However, the drain tubes can help the trees overcome the problem.

Trees having wet wood disorder suffer from gas produced by the bacterial fermentation of sap inside the trunk. As a result, sap may ooze out from openings on the trunk. Affected trees will show undersized off-colored leaves and a thin crown. A properly installed drain tube can help the tree to overcome the gas build-up inside.

There is no fungicide treatment for wet wood disorder. Provide proper watering, fertilizing, mulching and pest management as needed to help improve plant health.

What, how to seed

Problem: In recent years, we have been doing lots of lawn seeding. Which tall fescue varieties would you recommend for use in our area? Would you also please make comments regarding seeds and seeding method. (Pennsylvania)

Solution: Use a blend of at least three cultivars. When choosing cultivars, check the results of the National Turfgrass Evaluation Program, which can be found in the "Pocket Seed Guide" mailed with the July, 1991 issue of this magazine, or in the upcoming July issue.

Make sure that you get a certified seed having good percentage germination. Try to use current year's seed for better results.

An important factor in proper seeding is to maintain soil-to-seed contact. It is difficult to achieve this in lawns having heavy thatch. Ideally, lawns with greater than one inch of thatch should be dethatched prior to seeding. Yearly aeration may minimize the

thatch build-up problem if the thatch is less than one inch thick.

As far as seeding methods on established lawns, one method would be to spread seeds after aerifying. With this approach, seedlings may emerge in clumps from aerification holes. The seeds deposited on other areas in the lawn may or may not establish well because they are not in contact with the soil.

Another method is to use verticutting equipment such as a verticutter or a slicer/seeder, and then seeding. Most commercial people prefer a slider/seeder (aeroseeder) which will slice the ground and drop the seeds in the groove in one operation. This method is better, in that it will allow the seed-to-soil contact. This method can also be used to perform no-till renovation. Unless seeding into an existing lawn of fine-leaved tall fescue, the existing vegetation should be first killed by treating with non-selective herbicides such as Roundup. Seed after waiting for seven to 10 days.

After dethatching lawns with heavy thatch, you can use any of the above methods to renovate a lawn. However, the slicer/seeder method would give better results.

Because of excessive thatch in some situations, the sod may have to be stripped first. In this case, prepare proper seeding bed by tilling and raking. Then spread one-half of the recommended rate of seed in one direction and the other half in another direction. Gently drag a leaf rake to ensure seed-to-soil contact. Then spread straw over the seeded area. Keep the seeded areas moist but not wet during germination and establishment.

Biocontrols for bagworms

Problem: Are there any biocontrol programs we can use to manage bagworms on evergreens? Sometimes we also see the bagworms on other plants such as honeylocust. What would you recommend, and when is the best time to provide treatment? (Pennsylvania)

Solution: You can use *Bacillus thuringiensis* (B.t.). It can be purchased under the names Dipel, thuricide or Foray. Reportedly, Novo Foray B.t. has slightly longer residual activity than other products.

These bacterial biocontrol products can be sprayed onto trees.

The bagworm can attack both the evergreens and deciduous trees. They can be found on plants such as junipers, arborvitae, spruce, linden, pyracantha, crabapples, bald cypress and honeylocust. If the problem is not severe, hand-pick the bags and destroy them.

It is important to inspect susceptible plants during May and June and spray when the bags are 1/4 inch long or less. After treatment, periodically monitor the bags for insects inside the bags. If the larvae are still present, re-treat.

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Questions should be mailed to "Ask the Expert," LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT, 7500 Old Oak Blvd., Cleveland, OH 44130. Please allow two to three months for an answer to appear in the magazine.