

Tip blight on pine

How do you control Diplodia tip blight of pine? We have used Cleary's fungicide with variable results. When is the best time to treat?

—PENNSYLVANIA

Diplodia tip blight is now known as Sphaeropsis tip blight. This fungal disease infects Austrian, red and Scotch pine. It becomes active in spring and kills new candles before they emerge from the sheath and can infect subsequent years of growth. By the second year, the two-year-old cones may be infected and the fungus will overwinter to produce fruiting bodies. After three years, if no new needles are produced or retained, photosynthesis is severely reduced while the older needles are shed. This weakens the plant and predisposes it to insects and diseases.

Avoid planting Austrian, red or Scotch pine. Prune and destroy infected tissues. Prune when dry and disinfect pruning tools between cuts to minimize disease spread. In years with dryer weather, pruning may be sufficient, particularly in Scotch pine. Removal of two-year-old cones may reduce inoculum and disease incidence.

If the disease is severe, and cool moist conditions prevail, use Cleary's or other fungicides. Apply the first treatment before candles are 0.5 inches. Depending upon weather conditions, two to three applications may be necessary, along with sanitation pruning of infected tissue.

Reviving an ugly lawn

How do you improve the overall appearance of a lawn neglected for many years. The soil appears to be compacted and the lawn had excessive thatch and lots of weeds — at least 30 to 40% of ground cover is from weeds, mainly clover, ground ivy and violets. There are also large irregular areas with dead grass.

—ILLINOIS

Herbicides such as Trimec or Confront will help manage the "easy-to-manage" weeds. For "difficult-to-manage" weeds, such as violets, oxalis or ground ivy, herbicides containing ester formulations are better, although some may require repeat applications. Apply the treatment when the target weeds are actively growing.

The lawn may appear thin and less green after the herbicide treatment when the weeds die. However, the turfgrass should increase in density with proper maintenance and reduced competition for space, nutrients and light from weeds. Studies have shown that if the turfgrass is cut at 2- to 2.5-in. cutting height, there will be 30 to 40% less weeds.

The larger dead areas may be a result of previous insect or disease activity. If you know the past history of the problems, provide treatment as needed. Consider overseeding using grass mixtures for your area. Avoid and/or delay herbicide applications to seeded areas until mowed at least two to three times at the 2- to 2.5-in.

cutting height. (2,4-D or other herbicides can cause root injury to young seedlings.)

To manage the compacted soil and/or thatch problem, aerate the lawns. Consider overseeding along with aerifying.

Black vine weevils

We are seeing a lot of "C"-shaped cuts at the edge of ground-cover type of euonymus. What causes this? How do I manage this?

—ILLINOIS

The problem is most likely black vine weevils. These are chewing pests and become active in spring from their overwintering stage. Generally, they are found feeding at night from early May through August.

Since these weevils are nocturnal, examine the suspected plants after dark by gently shaking the plants over a white sheet of paper to dislodge the black vine weevil. Or use the pit fall method: place a piece of cardboard under the plants over a small pit made in the ground. This technique is beneficial in determining the level of pest activity as well as helping to manage the problem by mechanical removal.

To manage this pest, follow the above cultural methods of trapping or chemical method. Treat foliage with Dursban or Orthene at 3- to 4-week intervals from early June through August or until no living adults are found. It is important to provide thorough coverage of the foliage for better control. **LM**



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