

ask the expert

BY BALAKRISHNA RAO

Handling messy tree fruit

Some of our customers are concerned with fruit droppings from crabapple trees. They like the flowers, but not the messy fruits. Is there anything we can do to help them? Also, are there any crabapples that produce good spring flowers, but little or no fruits later on?

— MINNESOTA

Consider treating with a product called Florel for eliminating fruits on existing crabapples. Success in fruit prevention depends upon applying Florel at the proper time. Reports indicate that treating crabapples when the plant is in full bloom to petal fall is better. More research is needed to fine-tune the treatment timing.

I found some information from the University of Minnesota stating that columnar cherry crabapple (*Malus robusta* 'Srecta') has a nice symmetrical oval form. It is a sparse bloomer, produces few fruits and has been disease-free.

Spring snow crabapple (*Malus* 'Spring Snow') has good tree form and has been disease-free and also reportedly produces abundant white flowers and bears no fruit.

An extension agent may be able to tell you of other crabapple varieties that do not produce fruit.

Quackgrass attack

We have a nursery where we grow a number of deciduous crops. We also grow hemlocks, spruce and fir plants. What kind of herbicide can we use to control quackgrass in our nursery?

— NEW YORK

To manage a quackgrass problem in a nursery, consider using a herbicide such as Casoron, Eptan, Kerb or Princep. Before using or purchasing them, study the label and make sure that the herbicides are safe to use around the crops you are growing. You may want to consider matching the herbicide to the specific situation rather than selecting one for your entire nursery. For example, Casoron will suppress or control quackgrass and a few other rhizome-forming perennial weeds in many deciduous crops. However, it should not be used on hemlock, spruce or fir. Casoron should be applied during late fall or early spring when you expect good rain. Moisture helps activate the herbicide and reduce loss due to volatilization.

Eptan is used to suppress the growth of several weeds, including quackgrass. It must be well incorporated into the soil, preferably by tilling, soon after application. Therefore, it may not be suitable or practical to use in your situation. Eptan has a short-term residual.

Kerb is also labeled for managing quackgrass and should be applied in autumn.

Review the label for these herbicides and determine the one that will give you the best weed control.

Mysterious maple spotting

Norway maples planted along roadsides are showing leaf spotting and foliar discoloration. There is a pattern to the discoloration in the tree canopy. It is more on the street side, approximately 1/4 to 1/2 of the tree. It is found on three to four trees on both

sides of the street. There is no evidence of anthracnose or girdling root. It doesn't appear to be leaf scorch. Any idea what it might be? City personnel have treated the trees with fungicides for tar spot disease.

— CANADA

From your description of the symptom pattern, it appears to be related to an abiotic disorder. Since the trees have been treated with a fungicide to manage tar spot disease, the problem is most likely related to that. Check the mix rate and application technique. Since there is a specific pattern, the injury is roadside and it is limited to certain positions in the crown, I believe the foliar discoloration is related to spray injury. Most likely, the affected trees were treated with mix that remained in the hose for a period of time in the hot sun. If not recirculated, this hot mix can cause injury to treated foliage. Trees treated after the hot mix was sprayed out would not be injured.

To verify this, study the suspect plant on site. Also, study the temperature on the day the trees were treated and other areas in the city treated by the same person. If the product itself was phytotoxic, the injury pattern would be on all the treated trees. Make sure the mix rate and application techniques were done properly. Blasting with too much pressure also can cause injury.



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SEND YOUR QUESTIONS TO: "Ask the Expert" Landscape Management; 7500 Old Oak Blvd.; Cleveland, OH 44130, or email: sgibson@advanstar.com. Please allow two to three months for an answer to appear.