

ask the expert

BY BALAKRISHNA RAO

Transplant shock

I planted 10 five- to eight-ft. white pines last spring, and all summer I watered them with a drip hose and saw some new growth. By October some of the needles on all of the trees were turning yellow. What should I do?

— VIRGINIA

The yellowing and dropping of some of the needles in all plants appears to be related to transplant shock. Most transplanted plants, because their absorbing roots have been cut off and lost in the original growing area, experience transplant shock. They need to reproduce new absorbing roots and readjust to new sites. They also need to be watered well during this period. Too little watering can cause drought effects and too much watering can cause needles to turn yellow. The key is to keep the area moist all through the planting and establishment period. The recovery may take four to five years for a 1- to 3-in. trunk caliper size plant, and a 4-in. and above plant may recover in five to ten years.

Some fertilizers such as a quick release source of nitrogen can burn the absorbing roots if overused.

Other causes of yellowing and defoliation include root rot diseases, drought or natural causes. Normally, three-year-old needles do become yellow and drop. Study the plants and see if any of the one- to two-year-old needles are showing symptoms.

Since these plants are under stress, it is a good idea to protect them with borer treatments using insecticides such as Dursban or Astro. Also, reduce stress by improving plant health through mulching, watering and fertilizing as needed.

Unwanted vegetation

Which is the best herbicide to control/eliminate unwanted vegetation like banyan trees and allied plants, which sprout beside buildings and even occur in cracks near buildings which damage the masonry, structure and brick work?

— INDIA

Glyphosate 41% SL (Roundup) is one of the best ways to manage these undesirable sprouts. Another option is to use Picloram (sold as Tordon in the United States), Trichlopyr (known as Garlon) or clopyralid from Dow AgroSciences. These products may be sold under different names in India. Make sure they are labeled for this specific use. If not, test these products on a small area with proper permission. Treat plants when they are actively growing.

Another possibility is to use Arsenal herbicide from American Cyanamid Co., which can be sprayed over the sprouts or applied by hand with the cut-stem method. Again, make sure that the product is legal to use.

For small plants (sprouts), one application may be sufficient. However, for large plants, multiple treatments may be needed.

If the problem in and around the building is not too severe, mechanically removing the young seedlings as they sprout can reduce future problems.

Injured buds

We have a large, mature sycamore on a client's property that has been slow to foliate this year. We noticed that the leaf buds formed, but never sprouted

into full grown leaves and appeared dead. What can we do to help this beautiful tree?

— OHIO

The "slow to foliage" problem is probably because the buds are damaged. The buds were formed last year and were injured some time before bud break.

The damage could be from frost. If the buds broke dormancy before the last frost, the exposed plant parts could have been injured. However, the trees will refoliate by using the stored energy. If it happens year after year, this process can weaken the plant by depleting reserve energy of the plants.

The damage could also be from an early season leaf disease like sycamore anthracnose. This disease can be active under cool moist periods during spring. The fungus produces spores in previous years' cankers, infects the buds and causes bud blight. From there it infects leaves and causes leaf blight. Next, it causes twig blight and produces cankers.

Provide selective pruning as needed. When dry, disinfect the pruning tools between cuts. For anthracnose disease management, provide fungicide treatments such as Cleary's 3336 or trunk inject with Arbotech fungicides. Follow good injection guidelines to obtain good results. Also provide proper mulching, watering, and fertilizing as needed to help improve plant health.

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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.

