

ask the expert

BY BALAKRISHNA RAO

Anthracnose on maple

I have a Japanese maple that has white spots on some of the leaves and dying branches on the top. What is the problem, and how do I treat it? Also, do you know where I can find a dwarf apple?

— MICHIGAN

The foliar symptoms you have described suggest anthracnose fungal disease. The dieback you mentioned could be related to a number of stress factors. For example, if the root system is damaged, the corresponding top growth will show declining symptoms. Generally, maples produce surface roots. If these roots are cut off or damaged, the connecting aboveground parts will show dieback.

Another reason for the dieback is the activity of maple wilt fungal disease caused by *Verticillium* sp. To further diagnose this, take a finger-sized branch, remove the bark and look for greenish discoloration. If the twig is dry, it may not display the green well. In this case, slightly wet the cut surface and look for greenish discoloration in the xylem. If the xylem is plugged by fungal activity, wilting and dieback will occur.

For positive diagnosis, send representative samples to the diagnostic clinic or the Cooperative Extension Service. For anthracnose disease management, apply fungicide treatments in early spring two to three times at 7- to 10-day intervals. For maple wilt disease management, reduce stress and improve plant health care through proper mulching, watering and fertilizing.

To find a dwarf apple, contact some reputable nurseries such as Stark Brothers, Henry Fields, Gurneys Seed and Nursery

Co., and Miller Nursery. Make sure the dwarf apple trees are adaptable to the cold hardiness zone in your area.

Why all the rust?

We are seeing more and more rust disease in lawns. Do you know why? Also, how can we manage this? Some of our clients think we are spreading the disease through our mowers, shoes, etc.

— MICHIGAN

Rust disease makes lawns unattractive. In many situations, however, turf will recover.

In recent years, there has been an increase in rust problems. One factor could be related to not bagging clippings. Many cities are now imposing laws that don't allow you to collect clippings after mowing. This exposes healthy turfgrass to infected turfgrass clippings, and under certain conditions will spread disease.

It's also possible to spread the disease with mowing equipment and shoes but this is usually not the main cause. The reason is because there are disease-causing agents in other areas as well. Unless the turfgrass is susceptible and favorable conditions exist, the disease will not establish just because spores are present. For any disease to occur, there must be a susceptible turfgrass, virulent pathogen and favorable environment.

For disease management, consider using fungicides such as Bayleton, Rubigan, Banner or Heritage. Repeat treatments as needed. Two to three applications at 10- to 14-day intervals should provide adequate control. Where feasible, pick up the clippings, and water as needed in the morning.

Messy cottonwoods

Each year, nearby cottonwoods shed seeds with a fluffy, cotton-like substance, and this creates a problem. How can we get rid of these? Is there a product we can inject to eliminate these messy seed structures? When should we treat?

— ILLINOIS

Cottonwood trees (*Poplar* sp.) can present a serious problem when they begin to produce seeds, which are attached to cotton-like outgrowth. During the seed production and dispersal period, they can be blown to different places by the wind. This can trigger allergies or become a "messy" nuisance.

Flore growth regulator, a spray treatment, can eliminate undesirable, messy fruit. It is best to apply the treatment when most of the flowers are open in the spring. More research is needed to fine-tune the suitable treatment period. Applying from full bloom to petal fall in the spring should be adequate. Thorough coverage is important. While treating, make sure there are no nontarget objects like cars in the area since Florel causes a reaction on car paint.

I'm not familiar with any products you can inject for fruit elimination. Following good application techniques will help minimize drift potential.

Read and follow label specifications for best results.



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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.