

# ask the expert

BY BALAKRISHNA RAO

## Suspicious browning

**A 50-ft.-tall ash tree has been cut to 15 ft. to allow more light to reach a neighbor's vegetable garden. The plant now has five large branches growing from the cut end. The leaves of the branches on the neighbor's side are turning brown and are declining. Any idea what might be wrong?**

— CANADA

The problem may be site related. Study the plant and evaluate the pattern of browning and decline. Study the foliar symptoms, distortion and/or discoloration. Since the branches on the neighbor's side are the ones showing browning, the problem is probably coming from that side. Check for possible root injuries on that side of the tree, possibly from the use of certain herbicides. The new growth produced from the cut end might have increased shading on the neighbor's garden. Consider the possibility of borer insect activity as a cause of the decline. Look for frass or small holes on trunk and branches, and provide treatment as needed.

## Bayleton granular vs. Bayleton WP

**We're seeing red thread and dollar spot diseases in many of our properties. We've used Bayleton WP fungicide in the past and are currently using it. How good is the Bayleton granular formulation compared to the Bayleton WP formulation, and which would better manage these diseases?**

— MI

Bayleton fungicide performs better when

used as a preventive treatment. Results may vary when used as a curative treatment, or after the disease begins to show.

If the disease is severe, consider using other fungicides such as Banner MAXX, Cleary's 3336 or Rubigan to manage the existing disease activity. Lawns showing severe disease pressure may require overseeding to fill the empty spots. Consider using resistant varieties where feasible. Even with this approach, recognize that many diseases are difficult to manage after they begin to establish. The best approach is to provide preventive treatments on lawns with long histories of disease. Also, reduce stress and improve plant health through proper watering, fertilizing and pest management as needed.

Both red thread and dollar spot disease activity can often be managed by improving cultural practices. Reports indicate that the application of 1/2 lb. of fertilizer/1,000 sq. ft. helps mask disease scars.

## New lawn woes

**I'm a landscape professional who installed a new lawn with poor results. There were many empty spaces and weeds. The first spring, we treated the lawn with fertilizer and a pre-emergent for crabgrass. Almost one year later, the owner asked us to fix the lawn, but we told him it's better to overseed after Labor Day. He insisted he wanted the lawn to look good that spring. We seeded using all bluegrass. In the front, we applied topsoil, verticut it and seeded it. That grass is growing nicely. However, the same certified seed mix we used in the back didn't germinate well at all. Why? Did the residual from**

**the pre-emergent affect the seeding? The only difference in the backyard is that we didn't add any additional soil when seeding. The owner irrigated the lawn.**

— OH

Several factors may be responsible. The pre-emergent's residual might have contributed to some degree. You said you verticut it and added topsoil in the front. Both of these practices provide optimal soil-seed contact for germination and contribute to rapid establishment. Also, reports indicate that verticut lawns can be seeded if pre-emergent herbicides have been applied.

In the back, you said topsoil wasn't applied. This probably contributed to the poor germination and establishment, particularly if the verticutting didn't provide good soil-seed contact. Also, back lawns often have different growing conditions than front lawns, including soil pH, shading and irrigation. Kentucky bluegrass isn't tolerant of extremes of acidity or alkalinity, and does best when soil pH is 6 to 7. It also isn't tolerant of shading and requires moist conditions for germination and establishment, which is slower than ryegrasses' and fescues' germination and establishment.

Kentucky bluegrass lawns are difficult to establish. It may take at least two growing seasons before the lawn has acceptable density. If you decide to reseed, wait until fall. There's no need to apply new topsoil if you use a slicer/seeder and good soil-seed contact occurs.

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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](mailto:sgibson@advanstar.com). Please allow two to three months for an answer to appear.

