

## ask the expert

BY BALAKRISHNA RAO

### Spider mites

**Some Norway spruces on our clients' properties have dull, green needles. Some needles have yellowish flecking, discoloration and some browning. In a few cases, we found a small number of spider mites, which we treated with miticides. The results were marginal. Is there a different problem here?**

— MI

The yellowish flecking and browning appear to be related to spider mite feeding activity. The treatment you provided should have helped manage the problem. However, spider mite management success depends on several factors, such as choosing the right miticide and applying it at the proper rate and proper timing with thorough coverage.

Another important aspect of mite problem management is rotating miticides. If you use the same miticide over and over again, the mites may become immune to it. You also may be killing off the beneficial predatory mites. This makes the problem worse.

To avoid creating a population of resistant mites, use different miticides at different application periods. Even with rotation, there may still be a problem with resistance. Therefore, review your entire pest management program. Where feasible, reduce the use of multiple pesticides on a given host plant. Consider using a product that is environmentally friendly and ecologically sound with multiple target pest management capabilities.

Also, check for the eriophyid mite, which has four legs and a slightly longer body (unlike the spider mites which have

eight legs and round or oval bodies). Eriophyid mite damage can go unnoticed, and often is mistaken for other biotic or abiotic stresses. Products such as Avid or horticultural oil should help manage the eriophyid mite. Again, remember to rotate the treatments.

Needles damaged by mites won't recover. They will gradually defoliate. However, if the buds aren't dead, the plant may produce new needles. Water, mulch and fertilize the spruces to improve plant health.

### Winter weed woes

**We take care of several lawns that have winter annual weed problems. We're thinking of using herbicides in the fall to manage these weeds next spring. Will this herbicide application control weeds in spring? When would be the ideal time to apply herbicides? If we offer this in the fall, do we need to reapply in spring?**

— MI

Winter annuals are weeds that germinate as temperatures begin to cool, usually in early September in many places in the United States. Little germination will occur during December, January, and February when temperatures are close to or below freezing. Winter annuals appear again during March and April as the temperatures warm up. Winter annuals flower in spring and die when hot, dry weather prevails. Common winter annuals include: speedwell, common chickweed, henbit, bittercress. Often, perennial weeds such as dandelion and buckhorn plantain also

germinate in fall or early spring.

Preemergent herbicides such as Benefin, Benefin + Trifluralin, Prodiamine, Pendimethalin and Oxyzin, Bensulide, Oxadiazon, Dithiopyr and DCPA applied in fall will help manage winter annuals. Fall application can also manage early season control of annual bluegrass in turf as well as certain broadleaf weeds from seeds if the proper herbicide is applied before the weed seed germinates. Applications of preemergent in late August or early summer should control weeds during winter; applications in September through November help control weeds in spring and early summer. Determine more specific dates for germination and active growth in your immediate area to maximize your control.

In addition to a fall application, a spring application of preemergent herbicides may be necessary, depending upon the weed pressure in a specific lawn. If broadleaf weeds are a problem, consider using Isoxa-ben (Gallery), which can manage winter annual weeds as well as perennial weeds such as dandelion, buckhorn plantain and white clover. Another option is to apply a postemergent such as 2,4-D to take care of existing weeds, and use Gallery for residual preemergent control.

*Manager of Research and Technical Development for the Davey Tree Expert Co., Kent, Ohio*

**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.

