

ask the expert

BY BALAKRISHNA RAO, PH.D.

Lil' sprouts

What is the best way to selectively get rid of sprouts growing at the base of crabapple trees?

— MI

Sprouts growing at the base of trees present a serious aesthetic problem in many landscape ornamental plants. Crabapples in particular often have this problem.

One of the best ways to manage them is to prune them. This method is time-consuming and labor intensive, but there aren't many other practical solutions to the problem if you want to get rid of them quickly.

Another option is to use an herbicide such as Krenite, which kills buds at the base of foliage. Apply it on unwanted sprout growth late in the growing season when all the leaves are produced. For better results, apply between the time the plants' leaves mature and the time the leaves drop.

Make sure you have the proper pesticide license to use this product. Read and follow label specifications for best results.

Gypsy moths, again

The Gypsy moth problem is increasing every year in our area. We should have used Bt when the caterpillars were young and small. Now, they're large, and we're wondering what kind of insecticide would give us good results?

— OH

The Gypsy moth problem is slowly spreading from the eastern part of the U.S. westward. Recently, northeast Ohio has been experiencing the problem.

Bt and Conserve insecticides do an ex-

cellent job of managing small and young caterpillars during the first and second instar stage. However, as the caterpillars get older and larger, reports indicate that other products such as Sevin or Talstar work best.

Gypsy moth larvae (caterpillars) produce silken threads from trees and hang down or balloon. They spread from place to place by wind or storms. Through the ballooning method, they can enter a property after it has been treated with insecticides and cause feeding damage. Therefore, monitor the treated properties for reinfestation and retreat as needed. Read and follow label specifications for best results.

Mysterious leaf twisting

On a client's property, as well as nearby properties, a number of deciduous trees' leaves are cupping. We suspected herbicide injury, but there is no evidence of any herbicides applied to the lawn. However, there is a farm nearby. We think a herbicide or some other material applied there might have spread and caused the problem. Is this possible?

— IL

The problem is most likely caused by a volatile product coming from the nearby field. These volatile compounds could be related to some herbicides or ammonia-type fertilizers.

Volatile compounds in herbicides can migrate from a source like a farm to nearby locations, causing leaf twisting and curling distortion. This is often acute following an application and normally doesn't persist for too long. Therefore, only the exposed new growth shows leaf distortion. Subsequent

new growth may not show any adverse growth distortion. However, if future growth also shows problems, study the farm site and their operational practices. Affected plant portions can be pruned or left as is. Since deciduous trees lose leaves in the fall, the new growth won't display the problem unless similar contamination occurs next year.

Right time to treat?

Since Merit insecticide is a systemic product, we would like to use it to manage many general pests in the landscape. Our question is, should we treat suspect trees in the fall or in the spring?

— WI

Since it isn't clear what target insect pests you're trying to manage, I will base my answer on the label recommendations for specific pests. In my opinion, most Merit insecticide soil treatments are provided in the fall. This treatment is good for managing those pests that become active before June. Spring treatments should help manage pests that would become active after June.

Remember to irrigate the soil to move the product to the root zone. Irrigation will improve root absorption and translocation of Merit to the leaves. Otherwise, results may vary.

Before implementing this approach on a large scale, try it in a small area to learn more about its feasibility.

Read and follow label specifications for better 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.