

ask the expert

BY BALAKRISHNA RAO

Kudzu quandary

We're having problems managing Kudzu weed. Can we use PBI-Gordon Brushmaster herbicide safely to manage it?

— NC

Kudzu is a severe weed pest in many parts of the southeast. Transline, a selective herbicide by Dow AgroSciences containing clopyralid, can be applied if the Kudzu is growing over desirable, tolerant tree species. Check the supplemental label for examples of tolerant species before applying. Only plants that have emerged at the time of application will be affected and some needle/leaf curling of the desirable species may occur if applied during active tree growth. Another selective herbicide, Brushmaster by PBI-Gordon, can be used where desirable sensitive plants are not involved. Brushmaster is a low-volatile ester formulation containing 2,4-D, 2,4D-P and Dicamba. Low-volatile ester formulations can volatilize, particularly under high heat conditions, so be careful when treating an area around desirable broadleaf plants. Herbicide applications are most effective between late June and early October, as long as the Kudzu are actively growing and not under drought stress. The ideal application time is just prior to or during flowering. Always read and follow label specifications for best results.

Railroaded by weeds

We're interested in controlling vegetation near a railroad right-of-way for hiking trail clearance. What would be the best way to control all weeds?

Some of the area is gravel. We want to use chemicals that won't leach but will provide good control.

— OH

In your situation, you may be dealing with both grassy and broadleaf weeds. Your best option to manage a wide variety of existing weeds, as well as future weed growth, is to use a combination of postemergent and preemergent herbicides. Consider using a combination of herbicides such as Roundup and Surflan, or Roundup and Karmex.

Before applying, be sure that you or the person doing the application have the proper right-of-way vegetation management license to apply herbicides near specific sites being managed.

Roundup is a non-selective herbicide, which means it will discolor and kill any green vegetation. Therefore, use caution while applying. Depending on the vegetation type, the spray mix concentration will vary.

If the weeds present a problem in certain areas, consider spot treating with herbicides such as Roundup, Finale or Scythe.

Jumpin' junipers!

What might be responsible for the browning of juniper plant tips? On some plants we have found that .25- to .5-in. long tips are damaged and brown.

— PA

Based on your description, the problem is most likely caused by the juniper tip midge (*Oligotrophus betbeli*). Adults are a small

(1/8-in. long), grayish, mosquito-like fly. This is a true native fly. The larvae are 3/16-in. long maggots which mine inside needles and cause small galls. Several generations can be produced during the growing season. It then overwinters in the terminal tip galls.

When making a diagnosis, look for .25- to .5-in. long terminal buds on the outer foliage. Gently break open the tips and examine for evidence of mining and possibly the presence of reddish insects (maggots). They may also be in the pupal stage. Throughout the winter months, larvae can be found in tip galls. These galls are formed as a result of midge maggots mining in several needles at the bud tips. These galls are about the size of normal buds. Galls will remain green until the larvae begin to mature, then turn red and eventually become brown.

If it isn't severe, selectively prune infested tips and discard during dormant season. In heavy infestations, consider treating with insecticides such as Acephate or Dimethoate. Treat around mid-May and again around mid-June, early August and mid-September as needed.

If the problem is due to fungal blights such as juniper tip blight (caused by *Phomopsis* sp.) or Kabatina blight (caused by *Kabatina* sp.), larger portions of the tissue will be discolored and, as the disease progresses, fungal fruiting bodies will be found upon incubation in labs. Accordingly, treatment can be provided to manage these. 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.

