



HOME & GARDEN

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July 2009

Woody Ornamental Landscape Plant Tips

Culture

- If you have not yet applied mulch to your landscape now is the time to prevent weeds and help conserve moisture. Mulches should be applied only 1-2 inches deep and kept away from tree trunks. Mature trees do not benefit from being mulched except that the mulch keeps lawn mowers and string trimmers from damaging the trunks.
- Prune foundation shrubs back so they are at least 1 ft. from your house to help keep nuisance insects, like ants and earwigs, from getting into your home. You can thin and prune shrubs that have already flowered, like azalea and lilac. Be aware, however, that next year's flower buds begin to develop in mid-July. Deadhead the repeat-blooming spiraeas to keep them blooming all summer long.

Insects

- Aphids infestations on plants are beginning to be managed by the many predators and parasites. No chemical controls are necessary. In some situations a forceful stream of water from the hose will remove most of them..
- Many different kinds of caterpillars are feeding on shade trees. No controls are necessary unless severe defoliation is observed.
- Lace bug feeding can be observed on hawthorn, serviceberry, oak and sycamore as well as rhododendrons, azaleas, andromeda, and mountain laurel. You'll notice small white or yellow spots on the upper sides of leaves and small black fecal spots will appear on the undersides. Isolated shrubs grown in full-sun are more susceptible to lace bug damage. They are more of a problem on stressed plants on exposed sunny sites. You can spray with an ultra-fine horticultural oil or, if faced with a severe infestation, drench the soil with a systemic insecticide containing imidacloprid. Monitor the feeding damage to catch it early. Severely infested plants may be better off without a spray since the damaged leaves will be further damaged by the pesticide treatment. Insecticides are only necessary on trees three years or younger.
- The hemlock woolly adelgid is an aphid-like sucking pest that can severely damage hemlock trees, particularly when they are stressed. Adelgid nymphs are feeding now and can be sprayed with ultra-fine horticultural oil throughout the summer. Follow label directions carefully. Oil sprays should be applied to dry foliage only when temperatures are below 80° F. Research has shown that excess nitrogen may enhance adelgid populations on hemlock, so it is advisable not to fertilize hemlocks, that are infested with the hemlock woolly adelgid.
- Bagworm caterpillars are active. Look for the little bags crawling around on evergreen trees and shrubs and be prepared to spray infested trees with the microbial insecticide, B.t. between now and late July. Older bagworms are not well controlled with B.t. They are best collected by hand and destroyed.
- Japanese beetles feeding on plants will usually drop to the ground when disturbed. Therefore in many cases, the best control technique is to simply knock the beetles into a bucket of soapy water. Single Japanese beetle traps will attract Japanese beetles to your landscape resulting in increased damage. If using Japanese beetle traps always place them very far away from the plants you are trying to protect.
- Fall webworm nests may be noticed on various shrubs and trees. Webworm is easily controlled by pruning out and disposing of the nests in the trash.
- Soft scales are active now on a variety of shade trees. These can be controlled with an application of summer-rate horticultural oil.

Educating People To Help Themselves

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- Spruce spider mite usually becomes very active this month feeding on evergreens, especially dwarf Alberta spruces. Their feeding damage can be very devastating. Control them with a strong stream of water or an application of ultra-fine horticultural oil. Be aware that oils will discolor blue spruces. Oil sprays should be applied to dry foliage only when temperatures are below 80° F.
- The pear leaf blister mite is a tiny pest active on ornamental pear trees. Small raised bumps will appear on leaf undersides followed by dark brown spots. Dormant oil sprays can help control this pest.
- Boxwood mites produce small white spots, known as stippling, on leaves. Often predators will keep them in check, but if the mite damage starts to be increasing spray with horticultural oil at the summer rate to kill mite eggs and adults. Another pest of boxwood that appears in July is the boxwood psyllid which causes new leaves to cup inward. It is usually not a serious problem unless so severe that the new growth and overall health of the plant is damaged.
- Rose slug sawfly larvae are voraciously feeding on rose leaves at this time. These look like small bright green caterpillars that eat small holes in the leaves. They can be handpicked or use a systemic, all-in-one, rose product. Aphids may also be active on roses but predators and parasites will soon control them. A variety of abnormal-looking growths (galls) may be observed at this time on the leaves and twigs of oak, maple, hickory and other trees. Galls appear as growths of varying size and shape on leaves and twigs. These are harmless to the tree and should cause no alarm.

Disease

- The common leaf spot diseases are active on a wide variety of shade trees. These can be ignored in most cases, and do not require fungicide sprays.
- Volutella stem blight can be observed on boxwoods. This is a very destructive disease that kills the entire stem or branch of boxwood. Look for stem discoloration and salmon colored fruiting bodies on leaves and stems. Prune out damage wood and open the shrub up for better air circulation with selective pruning.
- Branch dieback and wilting on rhododendron could be caused by botryosphaeria. This disease occurs on stressed plants. The treatment is to remove infected parts and try to identify and correct the stress problem.
- When there is a lot of rain, such as we're having this year, anthracnose, a common fungal leaf blight, becomes widespread on shade trees such as oak, maple, ash and especially American sycamore. Leaves will appear blighted with large, irregular, brown-colored lesions. The lesions typically follow leaf veins. Trees that were defoliated earlier in the spring will re-leaf. Warmer, drier weather will stop symptoms.
- Dogwood anthracnose, is a serious dogwood disease, more prevalent this year because of the wet weather. The leaf spots have tan or purple borders and will enlarge in wet weather and kill entire leaves. The disease can then spread to twigs and branches and result in dieback of large limbs and even entire trees. It's important to remove all the suckers from the trunks. These suckers are the primary way that the disease enters and kills the dogwoods. For additional information, see HG 12, "IPM Series: Dogwood".
- Powdery mildew causes dogwood leaves to droop or curl and take on a purple or white color. Powdery mildew has also been very noticeable on crabapple and many other kinds of trees. A powdery white growth can be observed on the upper leaf surfaces and trees will look ragged and unthrifty. No fungicide spray will be effective now. However, next year you can apply a labeled fungicide, like horticultural oil, before bud break. Try to select resistant cultivars when planting new trees.
- Apple scab produces olive colored lesions on crabapple trees and will cause some leaf drop. Plant resistant varieties to eliminate this problem. There is no cause for alarm.
- Slime flux, which is a dark wet sometimes smelly discharge on trunks, may be observed flowing from maple, poplar and elm trees. This is a common, unsightly condition that cannot be controlled.

Have a pest or gardening question?

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