

Agriculture & Landscape Program

Landscape,
Nursery &
Urban
Forestry
Program

UMass Extension Landscape Message #19 - 2012

August 24, 2012

The Landscape Message is an educational newsletter intended to guide landscape, nursery and urban forestry professionals in identifying pests in the landscape, monitoring their development, planning management strategies and creating site-specific records for future management reference. UMass Extension has updated this issue to provide timely pest management information and the latest regional news and environmental data throughout Massachusetts.

What are YOU seeing?

Please submit your observations in the [Reader Feedback](#) section below

The Landscape Message follows a bi-weekly schedule for the months of July, August and September. The next message will be available on September 7. To receive immediate notification when the next Landscape Message update is posted, be sure to [join our e-mail list](#).

Scouting Information by Region

Regional Notes

Cape Cod Region (Barnstable) – General Conditions: While July was hot and dry, August is turning out to be hot and wet. Humidity levels have been quite uncomfortable. We did have a couple of cooler days where it was either wet or cloudy for several days in a row and overnight temperatures dropped into the 60s F. There is definitely a feeling of late summer in the air. Ragweed is blooming along with goldenrod. In the perennial border, many summer perennials have peaked and the fall bloomers are just beginning to show color. **Pests/Problems:** Marginal scorch is evident on plants that were affected but the dry July. While the Cape has received more than adequate rainfall during August, the damage occurred in July. Japanese beetles have disappeared but tiny grubs can be found in turf root zones. Mosquito populations have rebounded with all the precipitation and West Nile virus was detected in a mosquito in Marstons Mills. Be sure to wear repellent, especially when working early in the morning and late in the day. Wasp and hornet populations are also rising, as colonies are reaching their peak for the season. Powdery mildew is on phlox, beebalm, Flowering dogwood and lilac.

Southeast Region (Hanson) – General Conditions: Hanson received 2.25 inches of rain over the past two weeks. However, many plants continue to show premature leaf drop and early fall color. *Clerodendron trichotomum*, Rose-of-Sharon, *Albizia julibrissin*, *Campsis radicans*, *Hydrangea paniculata*, *Caryopteris* sp., Butterflybush, *Rudbeckia* 'Herbstsonne', Joe-pye-weed, *Rudbeckia trilobum*, *Rudbeckia* 'Goldsturm', *Rudbeckia subtomentosa* 'Henry Eilers', *Echinacea purpurea*, *Sedum* sp., *Corydalis lutea*, *Nepeta*, *Hosta plantaginea* and other late blooming *Hosta*, *Helianthus* 'Lemon Queen', Japanese anemone, ornamental grasses, *Hibiscus* 'Summer Storm' and other perennial hibiscus, *Lobelia syphilitica*, *Lobelia hybrids*, *Coreopsis* 'Harvest Moon' and *Phlox paniculata* are in full bloom. *Phlox paniculata*, often described as the "backbone of the summer garden", has certainly earned its name this summer. *Monarda didyma* has also been blooming for several weeks. Summer annuals and tropical plants, like canna, coleus, sweet potato vine, banana, geranium, lantana, dahlia and salvia have done very well with all this summer heat and continue to add color to the landscape. **Pests/Problems:** Mosquitoes continue to be problematic in Southeastern MA with the continued threat of Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) and west Nile Virus. Continue to take precautions when working out-of-doors especially at dusk or after sundown when mosquitoes are usually more active. Continue to remind clients to frequently empty bird baths, plant saucers, etc. to avoid providing breeding places for mosquitoes. Birdbaths, plant saucers, etc. may also be treated with *Bacillus thuringiensis israelensis* (Bti) in the form of pellets or "dunks". Be on the lookout for ground-nesting wasps as well as wasps nesting in bushes and trees. Wasps have been very active around bird baths and hummingbird feeders. Earwigs, wasps, stinkbugs, slugs, boxelder beetles, lacebugs, spider mites, leafhoppers, snails, biting flies, katydids, cicada killing wasps, ticks and mosquitoes are all active. Leaf blotch of horse chestnut, caused by the fungus *Guignardia aesculi*, is evident. *Polygonum cuspidatum* (Japanese Knotweed), goldenrod and ragweed continue to bloom. Goldenrod pollen is often mistakenly blamed for allergies in people, when it is usually the pollen from ragweed that is the culprit. Continue to remind clients to water landscape plants that were planted this season.

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East Region (Boston) – General Conditions: We gained 344.5 GDDs over the past two weeks, bringing us to 2377.5 GDDs, only 134 GDDs ahead of 2011. Daytime high temperatures have been consistently in the 80's with only one day in the 90's. We received several thundershowers and intermittent rainfall from August 11th through August 18th. We received a total of 1.6 inches of much needed precipitation. The landscape remains predominantly green and the precipitation along with some cooler nights has contributed to the recovery of unirrigated turf. Several late blooming trees and shrubs are in bloom: *Eleutherococcus sessiliflorus*, *Franklinia alatamaha* (franklinia), *Hydrangea arborescens* (smooth hydrangea) and its cultivar 'Dardom', *Hydrangea quercifolia* 'Pee Wee' (oakleaf hydrangea), *Indigofera pseudotinctoria* 'Rose Carpet' (indigo), *Koeleruteria paniculata* 'Rose Lantern' (golden rain tree), *Leptodermis oblonga*, *Rhododendron* 'Crete' (rhododendron) [flowering for the second time this year], *Tetradium daniellii* (evodia), *Tilia henryana*, and *Wikstroemia trichotoma* (wikstroemia). Just coming into bloom are *Caryopteris* cultivars 'Arthur Simmons', 'Dark Knight' and 'First Choice' (bluebeard), and *Elsholtzia stauntonii* 'Alba' (mint shrub). Vines in bloom include: *Clematis* cultivars 'Ernest Markham', 'Roguchi', and 'Westerplatte', *C. heracleifolia* var. *dauidiana* (hyacinth-flower clematis), *C. vitalba* (traveler's joy), *C. viticella* 'Polish Spirit' and *Cocculus trilobus* (moonseed). Herbaceous plants in bloom include: *Aconitum sinomontanum* (monkshood), *Aster pilosus* (frost aster), *Eupatorium* sp. (Joe Pye weed), *Helianthus tuberosus* (Jerusalem artichoke) and the unique *Tricyrtis macropoda* (toad lily). Many plants are forming fruit and adding interest to the landscape including *Chaenomeles* (flowering quince), *Cydonia oblonga* (common quince), *Magnolia* (magnolia) and *Viburnum* sp. (viburnum). Of note this week: A couple of branches of an otherwise healthy *Cercis chinensis* 'Don Egolf' appeared to be stressed in July, as the leaves had completely turned brown and crispy; recently one of these branches had begun forming buds and this week started to flower, creating a very unusual display in the landscape! **Pests/Problems:** Despite the precipitation and moderate temperatures, soil moisture remains a concern for recent transplants. Early fall color and leaf drop has been observed on several *Acer palmatum* (Japanese maple) and *Amelanchier* sp. (serviceberry). Weeds continue to thrive as *Convolvulus arvensis* (field bindweed), *Linaria vulgaris* (butter-and-eggs), *Solanum carolinense* (horsenettle), and *Vicia* sp. (vetch) are in flower. *Arctium minus* (common burdock), *Cynanchum louiseae* (black swallowwort), *Cyperus esculentus* (yellow nutsedge), *Euphorbia maculata* (spotted spurge), *Oxalis* sp. (yellow woodsorrel), many *Persicaria* (*Polygonum* sp.), and *Phytolacca americana* (pokeweed) are setting seed. Ampelopsis fruit is ripening and beginning to show color. Powdery mildew has been spotted on *Lonicera sempervirens* 'Magnifica' (trumpet honeysuckle), and *Wisteria frutescens* 'Aunt Dee' (American wisteria). Many Clematis are looking poor at this time of year, showing signs of stress due to the weather and clematis wilt. Dogwood Sawfly (*Macremphytus tarsatus*) have been spotted feeding on the lower leaves of *Cornus alba* (Tatarian dogwood).

Metro West (Acton) – General Conditions: The area received some much needed rain. 2.39" of rain fell during this two week reporting period, bringing our monthly total to 3.47". Lawns are beginning to green up once again! We have also gained 276 growing degrees since the last report. Woody plants seen in bloom are: *Aesculus parviflora* (Bottlebrush Buckeye), *Albizia julibrissin* (Mimosa), *Clerodendrum trichotomum* (Harlequin Glorybower), *Heptacodium miconioides* (Seven-Son Flower), *Hibiscus syriacus* (Rose-of-Sharon), *Hydrangea paniculata* and its many cultivars including 'Tardiva' and *Sophora japonica* (Japanese Pagodatree). Contributing even more color and interest to the landscape are some flowering herbaceous plants including: *Calamagrostis acutifolia* 'Karl Foerster' (Feather Reed Grass), *Cassia marilandica* (Wild Senna), *Echinacea purpurea* (Coneflower) and its cultivars, *Eupatorium purpureum* (Joe Pye Weed), *Hemerocallis* spp. (Daylily), *Hosta* spp. (Plantain Lily), *Macleaya cordata* (Plume Poppy), *Malva alcea* 'Fastigiata' (Hollyhock Mallow), *Miscanthus sinensis* (Maiden Grass), *Monarda didyma* (Bee-Balm), *Oenothera biennis* (Common Eveningprimrose), *Patrinia gibbosa* (Patrinia), *Pennisetum alopecuroides* 'Hameln' (Dwarf Fountain Grass), *Perovskia atriplicifolia* (Russian Sage), *Phlox carolina* (Carolina Phlox), *C. paniculata* (Phlox) and its many cultivars, *Rudbeckia fulgida* 'Goldsturm' (Black-Eyed Susan) and *Solidago* sp. (Goldenrod).

Pests/Problems: Webs of the Fall webworm have been seen on *Betula* (Birch). This is peak emergence for the Asian Longhorned beetle so continue to monitor for this invasive pest. Its 13 host genera are: *Acer* (Maple), *Betula* (Birch), *Ulmus* (Elm), *Salix* (Willow), *Aesculus* (Horsechestnut), *Fraxinus* (Ash), *Platanus* (Plane Tree), *Populus* (Poplar), *Celtis* (Hackberry), *Sorbus* (Mountain Ash), *Albizia* (Mimosa), *Cercidiphyllum* (Katsura) and *Koeleruteria* (Golden Raintree) for this invasive pest. Look for oviposition sites, frass and exit holes. The first beetle for this season was discovered and captured on July 26th in the Worcester County regulated area.

Central Region (Boylston) – General Conditions: No report available this week.

Pioneer Valley Region (Amherst) - General Conditions: After below-average rainfall with few soaking rains for many weeks, August has been a wet month in the Pioneer Valley, with 3.14" of rain during this reporting period. Typically the driest month of the year, the rains have provided much needed relief for trees, shrubs, and agricultural crops that were scorched by July's record-setting heat and humidity. As of 8/14, the U.S. Drought Monitor still listed western Massachusetts in a "moderate drought" (http://www.nrcc.cornell.edu/page_drought.html). However, the rains have helped to ameliorate the drought-stress that many landscape trees and shrubs have faced for several weeks now. Temperatures have also cooled, and night-time temperatures are now dipping into the low 50s. **Pests/Problems:** The rain and cooler temperatures has brought about a re-emergence of several pathogens that went dormant during the dry heat of July. Most notably, we are entering the period when we typically see the "second coming" of anthracnose fungi. Anthracnose of oak, maple and birch have all been observed in the last 7-10 days, and if conditions stay wet and cool, expect these pathogens to cause further damage as the season winds down. Additional leaf spot fungi have also re-emerged, such as *Volutella* leaf blight of boxwood. Shoot blight fungi continue their rampage this season, as *Phomopsis*, *Botryosphaeria* and *Pestalotiopsis* show no signs of subsiding anytime soon. On the non-woody side, late blight continues to cause significant damage to tomatoes in the Pioneer Valley. Interestingly, there have been few, if any, reports of the pathogen on potato,

suggesting that the strain of *P. infestans* in our region is tomato-specific. This is particularly disappointing, since the hot and dry conditions we experienced for much of the summer were ideal for tomato growing. With the memory of '09, when late blight decimated local tomato crops, still fresh in many minds, late blight has once again become a primary plant disease issue.

Berkshire Region (Great Barrington) - General Conditions: With the heavy showers last week, lawns and landscapes have once again greened up. Unfortunately, there are visible patches of brown grass in some lawns. It is likely that the grass is dead in these areas. With cooler nights, shorter days, and moderate moisture levels in soils, now is the time to renovate or reseed these spots. Overall, soil moisture levels are good. Yet, water levels in streams and ponds remain low. That should be a warning that drought conditions could easily return. Minimally managed perennial gardens are showing the wear and tear from the long stretch of high temperatures, drought, insect damage, and disease. Fall cleanup should begin now for these gardens. **Pests/Problems:** Stinkbugs, especially the Green Stinkbug (*Chinavia hilaris*) have been numerous in gardens and on fruit trees. Viburnum Leaf Beetle adults are still feeding but their numbers seem to have dwindled, as is the case with Japanese Beetles. Euonymus Scale is still in the crawler stage. Aphids, Spruce Spider Mite, and Two-Spotted Spider Mite, remain active. Blacklegged Tick (Deer Tick), mosquitoes, wasps, and hornets are troublesome. Berkshire County health authorities report finding mosquitoes infected with West Nile and Eastern Equine Encephalitis viruses in areas around Pittsfield and Sheffield. Though mosquito control spray programs have been initiated, it would be prudent for outdoor workers to routinely apply insect repellents. Reports of animal problems in home landscapes and gardens continue unabated. Deer, voles, chipmunks, and squirrels are the varmints most often accused of causing damage to plants. Landscape gardeners are finding numerous cases of downy mildew on impatiens.

Environmental Data

The following growing-degree-day (GDD) and precipitation data was collected for the two-week period, August 9 through August 22. Soil temperature and phenological indicators were observed on or about August 22. Total accumulated GDDs represent the heating units above a 50° F baseline temperature collected via our instruments for the 2012 calendar year. This information is intended for use as a guide for monitoring the developmental stages of pests in your location and planning management strategies accordingly.

Region/Location	2012 GROWING DEGREE DAYS		Soil Temp (°F at 4" depth)	Precipitation (2-Week Gain)
	2-Week Gain	Total accumulation for 2012		
Cape Cod	321	2258	82°	4.40"
Southeast	329	2203	78°	2.25"
East	344.5	2377.5	76°	1.60"
Metro West	298	1836	75°	1.83"
Central	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Pioneer Valley	289	2316	66°	3.14"
Berkshires	250	1881	70°	1.22"
AVERAGE	305	2145	75°	2.41"
n/a = information not available				

Phenology

Phenological indicators are a visual tool for correlating plant development with pest development. The following are indicator plants and the stages of bloom observed for this reporting period:

Indicator Plants - Stages of Flowering (begin, b/full, full, f/end, end)							
PLANT NAME (Botanic/Common)	CAPE	SOUTH EAST	EAST	METRO W.	CENT.	P.V.	BERK.
<i>Heptacodium miconioides</i> (Seven-Son Flower)	begin	begin	begin	begin	*	*	*
<i>Clematis paniculata</i> (Sweet Autumn Clematis)	*	*	f/end	b/full	*	*	*
<i>Sophora japonica</i> (Japanese Pagodatree)	*	*	end	begin	*	full	*
<i>Polygonum cuspidatum</i> (Japanese Knotweed)	full	full	begin	begin	*	b/full	*
<i>Vitex agnus-castus</i> (Chastetree)	f/end	*	*	*	*	*	*
<i>Clethra alnifolia</i> (Summersweet Clethra)	end	end	end	f/end	*	*	f/end
<i>Hibiscus syriacus</i> (Rose-of-Sharon)	f/end	full	*	f/end	*	end	f/end

<i>Buddleia davidii</i> (Butterfly Bush)	f/end	full	*	f/end	*	f/end	f/end
<i>Hydrangea paniculata</i> (Panicle Hydrangea)	f/end	full	end	f/end	*	full	f/end
* = no activity to report/information not available							

- CAPE COD REGION - Roberta Clark, UMass Extension Horticulturist for Barnstable County - Retired, Barnstable.
- SOUTHEAST REGION - Deborah Swanson, UMass Extension Horticulturist for Plymouth County - Retired, Hanson.
- EAST REGION - Kit Ganshaw & Sue Pfeiffer, Horticulturists, reporting from the Arnold Arboretum, Jamaica Plain.
- METRO WEST REGION – Julie Coop, Horticulturist, reporting from Acton.
- CENTRAL REGION - Joann Vieira, Superintendent of Horticulture, Tower Hill Botanic Garden, Boylston.
- PIONEER VALLEY REGION - Nick Brazee, Extension Plant Pathologist, UMass Extension Plant Diagnostic Lab, UMass, Amherst.
- BERKSHIRE REGION - Ron Kujawski, Horticultural Consultant, reporting from Great Barrington.

Woody Ornamentals

Insects

Dry conditions: Much needed rain has occurred on several occasions over the past 2 weeks across the state with varying amounts falling given the geographic locations. This has helped significantly to ease the effects of drought. However, in some areas, trees on drier sites are already showing scorch and in some cases, entire foliage going straight to brown ahead of normal fall color change. Our moderate drought this summer may be over but the effects will linger in the form of stressed trees with lower resources going into the winter months.

Viburnum Leaf Beetle: Adults remain active and feeding on wild and landscaped viburnum. Adult beetles will continue to emerge and feed up to the first frost of the autumn. Treat infested plants with a pyrethroid-based insecticide. Inspect plants for eggs embedded in the terminal shoots; prune away and destroy infested shoots.

Japanese beetle adults (Scarab beetle) seemed to be in lower than normal numbers this summer but are still actively feeding. Their emergence is nearing completion and they should disappear soon.

Hickory Tussock Moth caterpillars can still be seen but most have pupated now. Numbers of this species were higher than normal in western MA and parts of VT this season. This caterpillar is mostly white with some black markings. It is a hairy caterpillar and feeds on many deciduous hosts, including: walnut, hickory, ash, elm, oak, willow and occasionally annuals. In some cases, numbers can be high and damaging if not treated. Be careful in handling this caterpillar; the hairs can be quite irritating to the skin and eyes. Treat with a product that contains spinosad if necessary.

Galls on oaks on Cape Cod and Martha's Vineyard continue to be of concern. A cynipid stem gall wasp that is similar to gouty oak gall is the culprit. In some cases, the gall has been active on individual host trees for as long as 2 years and top die-back is apparent. The galls in the stems are not extremely obvious as with gouty oak gall. Historically, controls are difficult especially if the infestation has been active for 2 or more years on the same tree. However, there are several systemic insecticides that may help but if the tree's vascular system is already compromised from the attack then the product may not translocate well to all necessary growing points where the insect larvae feed within the stem galls. Usually, with such oak stem gall wasps, the attack lasts for several years and then natural controls, in the form of parasites, knocks the pest population to low numbers once again. Previously stressed trees, such as from repeated winter moth defoliation, may be at greater risk for attack by this gall-former.

Mosquitoes that vector EEE (Eastern Equine Encephalitis) are extremely active right now and are deemed to be at extremely high population levels, especially in Southeastern MA. The state continues to spray for the mosquitoes but care must be taken to avoid their bite, especially during the twilight hours when they are the most active. Try to avoid outdoor activity at peak feeding times; the use of repellents may be warranted in many instances.

Yellow jackets and other Stinging Wasps: Due to the lack of rain this summer, yellow jacket wasps, that primarily form their nests underground, are experiencing rather large population numbers this summer by not being flooded out. As summer wanes and less natural food remains available for these wasps, they tend to become more attracted to humans and their food thus leading to greater incidences of stinging. White-faced (bald-faced) hornets that make the large paper nests that predominantly hang from tree branches are also in large numbers now. They tend to be very territorial and are capable of inflicting rather painful stings.

Azalea lacebug remains active, primarily on evergreen azaleas. Plants growing in sunny locations can be severely affected. This pest remains active well into the autumn and heavily infested plants, especially if growing in sunny, hot and/or dry sites, can appear to be mostly devoid of chlorophyll by mid-August. Soil treatments with a systemic imidacloprid formulation can provide season-long protection but may take 2-3 weeks before it becomes systemic within the plant. Horticultural oil sprays targeted to the foliage undersides can also be very effective.

Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA) nymphs remain in their summer dormancy. They are settled, as second instar nymphs, on the smaller stems and are neither feeding nor developing at this time. This pest is still

easily controlled with horticultural oil sprays while it is dormant. Applications of soil or trunk applied imidacloprid can be applied now, especially after a rainfall event.

Emerald Ash Borer: EAB has not yet been found in MA but was collected earlier this summer in CT for the first time. <http://www.emeraldashborer.info>

Asian Longhorned Beetle (ALB) adults are active in the state but none have yet been found outside of the Regulated Area (120 sq. miles) of Worcester. The peak month for adult ALB activity is August. Be familiar with the damage that they cause and how to distinguish the ALB adult beetle from the look-a-like native insects. Report any potential finds to the proper authorities:

[How to Recognize ALB and its Signs](#)

How to Report, maps, etc - <http://www.mass.gov/agr/alb.htm>

Reported by Robert Childs, Extension Entomologist, Plant, Soil and Insect Sciences Department, UMass, Amherst

Diseases

Diseases of interest seen in the [UMass Extension Plant Diagnostic Lab](#) since last reporting period:

- **Pestalotiopsis shoot blight** of blue Atlas cedar (*Cedrus atlantica*), white pine (*Pinus strobus*), black pine (*P. nigra*) and arborvitae (*Thuja occidentalis* 'Nigra'). Symptoms included wilting and browning of new foliage, and in some cases whole stem and branch dieback. None of the infected trees had a regular watering regimen and were likely drought-stressed in some fashion. Drought-stress is a common predisposing stress leading to infection by *Pestalotiopsis*.
- **Dothistroma needle blight** of eastern white pine (*Pinus strobus*). Young tree planted in a hedge-row along a driveway. The tree had been pruned heavily on one side, creating several possible infection sites. Symptoms included needle and shoot dieback, and extensive resin flow from infected branches. *Dothistroma* is not especially common in the northeast, but has been responsible for extensive decline and death of pines in western North America.
- **Fusarium canker, Pestalotiopsis shoot blight, Botrytis blight** and **Macrophoma leaf spot** of boxwood (*Buxus sempervirens*). Approximately 1- to 3-year-old plant with no previous symptoms of disease started to decline over a period of two weeks. Boxwood blight was suspected, but has been rare in Massachusetts this summer. Plant was established in well-drained soils, partial sun and was irrigated.
- **Marssonina leaf spot** of white ash (*Fraxinus americana*). Numerous, small, circular leaf spots were present on the foliage. The spots appeared purple and often coalesced to create large, necrotic spots. Tree is 60- to 75-years-old and symptoms were reported to have appeared after the onset of hot and humid weather. Disease appeared on lower branches and now ~20% of tree is defoliated.
- **Phomopsis shoot blight** of Japanese holly (*Ilex crenata*) and inkberry (*I. glabra*). The plants had been established at their sites from five months to three years, and all showed symptoms of browning, general dieback and leaf drop. Transplant stress was suspected in all cases, which despite regular watering and care can occur even after multiple years at a site. Drought-stress and abiotic injuries also predisposed the plants to infection by this opportunistic pathogen.
- **Verticillium wilt** of tulip poplar (*Liriodendron tulipera*). 12-year-old tree has been established at site for six years and began showing symptoms of wilt in June. Symptoms on branches included water-soaked lesions, splitting of the bark, copious sap flow, and yellowing foliage that ultimately turned brown and shriveled. After incubation and culturing of diseased bark, the pathogen was present. Because *Verticillium* can survive in the soil, management of this disease is especially difficult.
- **Anthraco-nose** of grey birch (*Betula populifolia*). 8-year-old tree has been present on the site for five years. Symptoms developed this summer and included foliage browning and branch dieback. Birch leaf miner was present, in addition to anthracnose. Drought-stress was also suspected, as the tree was not watered and birches are very shallow-rooted and sensitive to dry conditions. Dieback was extensive and the tree is unlikely to survive going forward.
- **Cenangium dieback** of black pine (*Pinus nigra*). Tree is less than 10-years-old and there were no previous symptoms of disease. Symptoms included stunting and death of new growth. The pathogen, *Cenangium ferruginosum*, is uncommon in this region but usually appears after periods of drought or an unusually cold winter. It causes needle browning which proceeds from the base to the tips.
- **Phyllosticta leaf spot** of kousa dogwood (*Cornus kousa*). 40- to 45-year-old tree that showed no previous symptoms of the disease. Within two weeks, numerous grey to brown-colored spots (with purple margins) appeared on the foliage. Tree may be suffering from exposure stress, as nearby trees that were shading the dogwood were recently removed.

Reported by Nick Brazeo, Extension Plant Pathologist, UMass Extension Plant Diagnostic Lab, UMass, Amherst.

Landscape Turf

Agronomy

Regular precipitation over the last reporting period has been welcome from an agronomic and hydrologic standpoint, although the often heavy rain caused headaches with flooding and soil erosion in some locations. The good news is that many soils have transitioned from dust dry to being reasonably 'receptive' again, meaning that future rains will be less prone to runoff and provide greater plant benefit.

Many turf areas that entered this month fully dormant have now resumed growth and are steadily transitioning back to healthy green color. Mowing crews that became accustomed to longer intervals are

quickly returning to a more 'normal' routine. Now is the time to scout for areas that are lagging behind in terms of recovery. Areas not showing signs of life in response to the recent rains and cooler temperatures should be pinpointed for extra attention in the short term. Since certain soils remain dry and soil temperatures are still on the high side in some parts of the state, use discretion before undertaking intensive cultural practices.

Some have asked about the best repair methods to rapidly fill in turf that does not recover acceptably from summer dormancy. As long as inherent problems with soil condition or the growing environment are not present, less-intensive repairs are often preferable to more involved renovation projects. Even when on-going issues with the site, pests or management resources do exist, superficial, seed-based repairs are fast and comparatively cheap in terms of materials and labor. As long as the basic fundamentals are followed there is a solid guarantee of improvement, even if it is only a temporary fix. Following careful seed selection, only a few simple ingredients are required for effective repairs:

1. **Water:** adequate moisture is critical to the success of any seeding endeavor. Turfgrass seeds must absorb a certain amount of water to initiate the germination process. Following germination, consistent moisture is necessary to keep tender, developing tissues from drying out. Although Mother Nature sometimes cooperates, most projects require some measure of irrigation to fill in the gaps. Regular watering must continue throughout the establishment phase until the plants have put down a mature root system.
2. **Fertility:** Nutrition also has a large role in the pace and quality of establishment. Although the presence of P in fertilizer materials has been under scrutiny for all aspects of turf fertility in recent years, a traditional starter fertilizer with an NPK ratio of approximately 1:2:1 is still the way to go for all types of establishment including overseeding and repairs. Sufficient P availability is vital for root development and in turn the best chance of long term success.
3. **Seed to soil contact:** When those tiny roots begin to emerge, don't make them work for something to grab on to. Seed left on the soil surface is also more vulnerable to desiccation, washing, or hungry birds. Use the best method available:
 - **Slice seeding** with a power overseeder is a very efficient way to maximize seed to soil contact with a minimum of collateral disruption to the existing turf canopy, and to cover large areas quickly. Be sure to slice seed in two directions for greater uniformity and faster fill-in (see photo at right).
 - Broadcast seeding **following dethatching or core aeration** operations is a low-cost way to get more bang for your buck and help speed recovery from these disruptive practices. Some managers even prefer to do all of their overseeding using this method, and find it cheaper, faster and less cumbersome than purchasing and wrangling a bulky power overseeder.
 - On small thin patches that don't necessitate a power approach, it often makes all the difference to use a **rake or 'Garden Weasel'-type tool** to rough up the surface prior to tossing seed down.
4. **Water:** This point cannot be stressed enough. Despite strict attention to the other ingredients, new seedings will fail without ample and even moisture. At the same time, too much water can cause washing and unwanted movement of seed and soil. Use clean, weed-free mulch materials where possible and indicated to help retain moisture and prevent washing.



A short note on **bees, wasps and hornets**: As mentioned in other reports, these insects begin to feel pressured at this time of the year to complete preparations for the oncoming winter season. This stress can make them particularly aggressive, territorial, and protective of nests. In addition, colonies have had the bulk of the growing season to grow, further increasing the potential for painful and dangerous encounters. Landscape professionals are advised to use caution and carefully scout managed areas for nests and general stinging insect activity, especially areas that are maintained infrequently or irregularly.

Report and photo by Jason Lanier, Extension Educator, UMass Extension Agriculture & Landscape Program, Amherst

Urban & Community Forestry

NEW! In the future this section of the message will be populated with timely updates for Urban & Community Forestry, written by Rick Harper. In August, Rick joined the Department of Environmental Conservation (ECO) at the University of Massachusetts Amherst as an Extension Assistant Professor of Urban & Community Forestry. He comes to us from the Horticulture, Natural Resources and Environment Program at Cornell University's Cooperative Extension association in Westchester County, NY. Rick will be spending his time at UMass reaching out to urban foresters in the state, teaching, and conducting research. Stay tuned!

Other Relevant News / Pest Alerts

Impatiens downy mildew has been wide spread this season. For detailed information on Impatiens downy mildew see our [earlier message in the NE Greenhouse update](#). A new fact sheet is available - "[Impatiens Downy Mildew in Home Gardens](#)". The fact sheet is for garden retailers to print off and distribute to their home gardening customers to help them to answer questions about this disease. It is a three page fact sheet, with the third page containing photos.

We are seeing rapid spread of **late blight** into unsprayed or minimally sprayed tomato over the past two weeks. This late blight outbreak threatens all tomatoes in the region. Frequent rains and long rainy periods in the past two weeks combined with the increasing amount of inoculum in the region make it critical that farmers and gardeners protect their tomato crops with fungicides on a consistent 5 day spray program. For more information refer to <http://extension.umass.edu/vegetable/alerts/late-blight-alert-update>

September is National Preparedness Month: "Communities that recover successfully tend to drive their own recovery," said David Kaufman, director of FEMA's Office of Policy and Program Analysis recently at the Natural Hazards Workshop in Boulder, Colo. "There is a need for a shared sense of direction and urgency – collective preparation." With September's National Preparedness Month just days away, this is a reminder that resources are available to help families, farms, businesses and whole communities become as prepared as possible for disasters through the Extension Disaster Education Network (EDEN). Take advantage of EDEN's NPM materials, which include news releases that you can customize/localize to suit your needs. Other resources available are editorials, fact sheets. Links to resources from federal agencies can also be found there. From the EDEN home page www.eden.lsu.edu click on 'Resources' and 'National Preparedness Month'. Drought, flood, tornado and other information shared by our colleagues at other land grant institutions can also be found at the website.

Reader Feedback

New! We invite you to share your observations and comments for the current message. Please note that all comments are subject to moderator approval, and please refrain from submitting requests for information in this space.

Comments

impatience downy mildew

Submitted by Anonymous on August 26, 2012 - 12:06.

All plastings infected. Complete loss! Litchfield county Ct.

[reply](#)

green stinkbugs

Submitted by Anonymous on August 25, 2012 - 13:45.

Green stinkbugs have invaded by vegetable gardening...ruining green peppers, tomatoes, and cucumber plants.

Is there anything to do besides looking and squishing.

[reply](#)

evil weed

Submitted by Anonymous on August 25, 2012 - 10:50.

Finding massive invasions of spider wort in gardens and the woods

[reply](#)

Pale Mountain Dandelions

Submitted by Anonymous on August 24, 2012 - 17:30.

Most of the lawns we do are up the hills. Hawley, Ashfield, Goshen, Buckland and Charlemont. Seeing lots of Pale Mountain Dandelions in the lawns. None in the fields, just the lawns. The higher the altitude the more we see.

The books say it is native to the Rocky Mountains. Wondering if the dry conditions brought it on. The old timers up there say they've never seen them before.

[reply](#)

Post new comment

Subject:

Comment: *

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Full HTML

- Web page addresses and e-mail addresses turn into links automatically.
- Image links with 'rel="lightbox"' in the <a> tag will appear in a Lightbox when clicked on.
- Image links with 'rel="lightboxshow"' in the <a> tag will appear in a Lightbox slideshow when clicked on.
- Links to video content with 'rel="lightvideo"' in the <a> tag will appear in a Lightbox when clicked on.

[More information about formatting options](#)

Important Informational Resources

Water restrictions: has your community implemented them for 2012? Check the [Mass DEP Municipal Water Use Restrictions map](#) and then contact your local water supplier.

To receive immediate notification when the next Landscape Message update is posted, be sure to [join our e-mail list](#).

For a complete listing of upcoming events, see our [Upcoming Educational Events page](#).

Looking for a job? Hiring for a job? Search available positions or post job opportunities on the [UMass Stockbridge School JobNet](#).

Diagnostic Services

A UMass Laboratory Diagnoses Turf and Landscape Problems - Accurate diagnosis for a turf or landscape problem can often eliminate or reduce the need for pesticide use. The UMass Extension Plant Diagnostic Lab is available to serve commercial landscape contractors, turf managers, arborists, nurseries and other green industry professionals. It provides woody plant and turf disease analysis, woody plant and turf insect identification, turfgrass identification, weed identification, and offers a report of pest management strategies that are research based, economically sound and environmentally appropriate for the situation. The fee for a woody plant disease analysis is \$50; the fee for turf disease analysis or nematode assay is \$75. All insect, weed and turfgrass identification samples are \$25 each. For detailed submission instructions see [Plant Problem Diagnostics](#)

Soil and Plant Tissue Testing - The University of Massachusetts Soil and Plant Tissue Testing Laboratory is located on the campus of The University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Testing services are available to all. The function of the Soil and Plant Tissue Testing Laboratory is to provide test results and recommendations that lead to the wise and economical use of soils and soil amendments. For complete information, visit the UMass Soil and Plant tissue Testing Laboratory web site at: <http://www.umass.edu/soiltest> Alternatively, call the lab at (413) 545-2311.

Ticks are active at this time! UMass tests ticks for the presence of Lyme disease and other disease pathogens. [Learn more](#)

[Civil Rights and Non-Discrimination Information](#)

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