



Spring Pests and Diseases

Winter Injury (Environmental)

Problem Broken branches, dead flower buds, brown leaves, cracks in tree bark, dead roots.

Cause Winter injury may result from extreme cold temperature, frozen soil, drying winds, snow load on branches, length of time cold period occurs, water freezing in tree bark.

Solution Prune out dead branches and leaves, make proper pruning cuts to prevent disease entry. Check cracks in tree bark for insects and remove them. Before removing a plant wait to be sure it is dead; injured plants may recover but may take years to restore its form.

Aphid Damage (Insect)

Problem Leaves appear yellowish and plant may have stunted growth. New leaves may be curled and distorted. A sticky substance may follow which often turns black from the presence of a sooty mold fungus.

Cause Aphids are small, soft-bodied insects with long slender mouthparts to suck out fluids from tender plant parts. Almost every plant has one or more aphid species that occasionally feed on it.

Solution Do not overdo nitrogen fertilizer. Knock off pests with hard sprays of water. Use insecticidal soap if needed. Encourage natural enemies by planting insectary plants, such as alyssum, coriander, candy tuft, yarrow, dill and sunflower.

Winter Cutworm (Insect)

Problem Leaf chewed along the edges, root damage, the stems near ground level chewed off.

Cause Caterpillar of the Great Yellow Underwing moth (*Noctua pronuba*).

Solution Conduct periodic search-and-destroy missions to get rid of offenders. The most successful hours are at 10 or 11 PM. Bt is effective only if the caterpillar is less than half grown (about ¾ of an inch).

Flea & Cucumber Beetles (Insects)

Problem Flea beetles make leaf holes resembling shots from a small BB gun; cucumber beetles make larger irregular holes. New vegetable plants may be completely chewed up. Grown plants have greater tolerance for damage.

Cause Flea beetles are black and small (about the size of a pin head). Cucumber beetles are either spotted or striped, resembling ladybugs but are more oval in shape.

Solution They are difficult to control with chemicals. Tools that work include crop rotation, floating row covers, trap crops, and yellow sticky traps. Encourage beneficial insects with insectary plants.

Spotted Wing Drosophila (Insect)

Problem During the ripening stage, berries and soft fruits may show early mold, wrinkling, softening or collapse of berry structure, small holes on fruit surface, and white eggs and maggots inside berries.

Cause Spotted Wing Drosophila is a fruit fly that lays her eggs inside developing soft fruits and berries causing them to rot during ripening.

Solution Catch flies with traps of apple cider vinegar. Harvest early. Pick up and dispose dropped berries as trash but not in your compost. Encourage beneficial insects into the garden.

Dogwood – Anthracnose (Fungus)

Problem Leaves show large, brown, irregularly-shaped blotches often at or near the leaf tip, centered approximately on the midvein. The blotch often spreads down the midvein. Infected leaves commonly drop

before autumn. Affected twigs have sunken tan to brown spots with purple borders, which eventually enlarge and girdle the twig, resulting in twig dieback.

Cause A fungus that overwinters on dead twigs and leaves on the tree and the ground. Tiny brown fruiting bodies of the fungus are easy to see on dead twigs and leaves.

Solution Prune out and destroy infected twigs. Rake fallen leaves spring through fall and destroy. Do not let irrigation wet the tree canopy. Plant resistant species and cultivars: Pacific dogwood, *Cornus nuttallii*, is very susceptible; flowering dogwood, *C. florida*, is moderately susceptible; *Cornus kousa* cultivars are resistant, and *C. mas* and *C. officinalis* are thought to be resistant.

Lilac – Bacterial Blight (Bacterium)

Problem New shoots show brown spots on stems and leaves, spots grow rapidly and turn black during wet period. Infected young stems wither and die. Mature stems show elongation of infected area. Flower clusters and buds become blackened.

Cause *Pseudomonas syringae* pv. *syringae*, a bacterium. Bacteria overwinter on diseased twigs or on surface of healthy wood. Wounds from pruning or budding, frost damage, incorrect soil pH, poor or improper nutrition, and infection by other pathogens weaken plant and make it susceptible. This bacterium also causes bacterial blight of pear, blueberry, cherry, maple, and other woody plants.

Solution Maintain good air circulation by spacing plants properly and by pruning to open the canopy. Remove and destroy affected tissues immediately. Plant resistant species or cultivars. Do not over fertilize young plants nor fertilize in late season. Protect from rain and frost with plastic hoop houses or similar structures -- this treatment has been as effective as the best chemical method.

Rhododendron –Azalea Lace Bug (Insect)

Problem Foliage surface appears yellow and stippled and underside shows black ‘tar’ spots, more severe on plants in the sun. Damage is usually apparent by early to mid-July.

Cause Azalea lace bugs. Adult insects are whitish-tan and approximately ⅛-inch long with lacy wings. Nymphs (youngsters) grow to about 0.13 inch and are spiny in appearance.

Solution During winter check the underside of leaves for brown patches of eggs. Remove infected leaves to reduce pest population. Hosing the underside of leaves with a strong jet of water will remove wingless nymphs upon emergence, usually in early spring. Repeat to reduce adult populations. Maintain plant health by providing proper water and nutrition. Grow plants in shady areas.

Boxwood Blight (Fungus)

Symptoms Leaf spots, stem cankers, defoliation, and death of boxwoods.

Cause A fungal pathogen, *Calonectria pseudonaviculata*. May also infect pachysandra and sweet box (*Sarcococca* sp).

Solution Limit pruning during wet weather; remove and destroy dead leaves and plant debris; disinfect pruning equipment; avoid overhead irrigation; space and thin (in the fall during dry weather) plants for good air circulation. Consider using Japanese holly (*Ilex crenata*) as an alternative.

Master Gardener™ Advice

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