

# **Wisconsin Horticulture Update: Friday April 23, 2004**

**County roll call** - Dane, Eau Claire, Jackson, Monroe, Outagamie, Price, Racine, Rock, Washburn, Waukesha, Winnebago

## **Phenology**

### **South Central**

Pasque Flower FB  
Forstia FB  
Scilla FB  
Dandelion 1<sup>st</sup> Flower  
Marsh Marigold early bloom  
Dutchman's Breeches FB  
Koreanspice Viburnum First Flower  
Wild Plum early bloom  
Phlox subdulata early bloom  
Norway Maple FB  
Hepatica past bloom

### **South East**

Scilla FB  
Pussy Willow past bloom  
Forstia FB  
Daffodils FB  
Dandelion FB  
Magnolia FB  
Wild Plum early bloom  
Wild Cherry FB  
Flowering Crab early bloom  
Amelanchier laevis FB  
Gill over the ground early bloom

### **West Central**

Scilla  
Pussy Willow  
Forsythia  
Crocus  
Daffodils  
Dandelion  
Magnolia  
Earth worms on the sidewalk  
Dragon flies out  
spring peepers

## **County Reports**

**Spooner** – We've had questions on trees and berries, which kinds of varieties are good for the area; fertilizing things, most of your basic stuff there. People are doing homework for next year on things like blackrot of grapes, tomato blight, how to get ahead of it for the year. We still have some carryover on Asian lady beetles, not as many as in the past. We had a stray llama show up here at the Ag Research Station here.

## **Entomology – Phil Pelletteri**

I was on the road yesterday, and just went through my emails. I have to report that the state of Indiana has a confirmation for emerald ash borer [http://www.ipm.msu.edu/CAT03\\_land/L03-21-03.htm#3](http://www.ipm.msu.edu/CAT03_land/L03-21-03.htm#3). That means Ohio, Michigan and Indiana. It was found at a Yogi Bear Campground, which interesting enough, it makes a lot of sense because I think the concern is that infested fire wood has left Michigan and as people are bringing wood along when camping, that's an easy way to introduce these insects. Even in Wisconsin, DNR and others are spending quite a bit of time checking campgrounds and state forests because that's one of the more likely places for that to be brought into the state. I remember the location was close to Fort Wayne.

As far as critters, it's still fairly quiet. I'm getting quite a few carpenter ant *Controlling Carpenter Ants (A3641)* calls, just because the outside ants have been active as well as the inside ones. This is also the season for carpet beetles *Controlling Pantry Pests (A1984)* and people are looking closely around their baseboards and might not be surprised to see them moving around.

As far as outdoor stuff, everything is little bit on hold. For those in the landscape area I would caution that we're getting close to the time for treating for spruce gall adelgids. It's time, almost past the time for treating Zimmerman pine shoot moth. Those are a couple we need to keep our eyes open on. It doesn't appear we had enough significant winter temperatures to knock the critters back, so we'll just have to see how the spring progresses, if it stays a gradual warm up, that usually means more problems with the insects versus warming up and then getting a cold snap that tends to stress things out.

## **Questions:**

**Mike – A woman was in the garden yesterday and found a horse-hair like critter in her watering bucket that when she pokes it with a stick, wraps around it. Is there any kind of worms out there active like that right now?**

There is a worm called a horse hair worm that's related to the nematodes. They are internal parasites, usually of grasshoppers and crickets. The story goes that it was often believed if you dropped a horse hair in water it would transform into this worm. What has happened is that the cricket or grasshopper has jumped into the bucket and this thing has emerged. They are parasitic and can be upwards to 5 inches long, but are very thin. They are harmless to people. I had a sample of an ant sent in last week that had a horse hair worm. There was approximately a 3-inch worm inside the ant's abdomen. We don't worry about them, and one would argue that it's beneficial because they are eating grasshoppers and other

things we don't want there. You often see them on soil surfaces after it rains; they need moist conditions to stay alive and viable.

It's nice to know it's nothing to worry about.

Do you know if Green Lake is going to have the rose chafer scent traps for sale again this year, or are they going to sell the rose scented ones?

I don't think the rose chafer lure is available anymore. I haven't been able to track down a source for it. Because it is such a regional and specialized problem I think it was too small of a market and companies decided to back out.

Do you have any sources we could steer people towards for floating row cover or something like that for grapes and strawberries?

The easiest place to look for it is Gardens Alive. I think a lot of places have it. I've even seen it in some of the larger garden stores at times.

In the apples we're checking this week at West Madison, we're seeing quite a few red banded leaf rollers being caught under the thermal traps. Do you have any pest management suggestions?

That's an insect often considered a secondary kind of pest. Usually you would pick it up at petal fall. For people who had traps with a lot of numbers they would consider the pre-bloom spray, but for the average backyard gardener, that's not going to be very feasible. We'll just have to see how that comes out. I'd heard those reports from West Madison.

## **General Horticulture – Bob Tomesh**

The plums and Amelanchier are in full bloom, at least in Southern Wisconsin. Yesterday the Alderman plum were absolutely in full bloom. Since we had frost yesterday morning, I may be plum-less, at least on that variety this year. It's interesting I have 3 different varieties of plums and that's the only one that's in full bloom. There is frost forecast for tonight. Last year Teryl Roper put together a report on frost and what causes damage. I'll include that with the report.

Diseases, in terms of crab selections

<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/wihort/gardenfacts/X1012.pdf>

, I think I've had about 3-4 requests for the bulletin on crab varieties that are resistant to apple scab. There's a very good fact sheet bulletin out there that can be used. I would encourage you to do some promotion on that because we have a number of crabs that need replacement. This would be a good source to get that information out to the news sites in your area.

Some apples are in the pink stage. When you start looking at a number of varieties, they are at a number of stages in growth. Some will be coming into bloom if we get warmer weather this next week.

In vegetables the soils have warmed and in some cases have dried enough that some of the cool season vegetables are being planted. If you look at the pest schedule, the seed corn maggot and cabbage maggot adults *Managing Insects*

*in the Home Vegetable Garden (A2088)* are becoming active about the time the flowering crabs are in bloom or the dandelions are in bloom. We're just reaching that stage so for some of the root type vegetables, we may see some insect activity in those areas. Protection would be highly suggested.

In flowers, people are still holding out. They're dividing some late summer and fall blooming perennials. We have about 3 weeks before Mother's Day, even though the weather is nice, we still have the intermittent frosts that can cause some damage. We say here in the southern part of the state say at least Mother's Day and for the people in the north, we're usually looking at Memorial Day for doing transplants to get past those late season frosts.

In trees and shrubs, damage from mouse girdling is being reported. Pruning compound might work, but the wood is probably a little too dried out at this point for doing any type of therapeutic care. Something is better than nothing on mouse girdles. Sometimes you can protect the damaged trees by spraying the damaged area with pruning compound. If there are some cambial cells remaining, it will regenerate underneath that pruning compound because they haven't dried out. I mentioned last week that there is a good selection of bare root stock at the nurseries. It's a good time to be doing some transplanting. Be selective. Ask what they have in terms of disease resistant materials, especially in the apples and fruit. I think we need to encourage homeowners to look in that direction because as I have seen very few of them really have a good pest protection plan in place, or they have good intentions, many do not follow through the plan during the entire season.

Lawns, crab grass control is being suggested.

**Questions:**

None.

**Plant Disease Clinic – Brian Huddelson**

We had about 100 samples come in since the first of the year. Some highlights in terms of what we've been seeing are water stress issues, carryover from the last couple of summers when we haven't had a lot of rain. We've had a lot of conifers coming in looking pretty tough, a lot of purpling on the branches, particularly on spruces. Also a lot of tip dieback on varieties of conifers. It's most likely indicative of just a lack of water. In combination with that, we've also been picking up a lot of weird canker organisms on the tips of those branches when they die. I think it is due to stress, allowing these fungi to be more prevalent and to be a little more active on these particular trees. We've seen a lot of tip dieback caused by phomopsis, this normally causes a problem on junipers, but we've been seeing it on other types of conifers as well. Also an increase in sphaeropsis, which is typically a problem in Austrian and Scots pine but we've been seeing it on odd things like juniper and also occasionally on spruce.

We've had a ton of greenhouse samples come in, more than what I remember in the past. We've had several instances where heating systems have been malfunctioning and there's been some ethylene that's gotten into the interior of

the greenhouse and caused some odd growth habits on ornamental plants and vegetables.

We've had some samples come in that tested positive for impatient necrotic spot virus which is a thrips transmitted virus. That's pretty much the highlights on what we've seen.

You should have received an email from me 2-3 weeks ago with a new fact sheet on sudden oak death. That's kind of the disease of the season, at least in the ornamental arena this year. The reason why it has become such an issue is because up to this point, the pathogen that causes this particular disease was thought to be isolated primarily in California and a little in Oregon. But recently there was a large nursery in southern California in the LA area, where they found *Phytophthora ramorum* which is the cause of sudden oak death. They have shipped hundreds of thousands of plants across the US and there is concern that at least some of these plants could potentially be contaminated with this fungus. The fact sheet tells you a little bit about the disease. I'll probably make a revision of the host list on the sheet. The primary concern was the movement of the fungus on *Camellia* plants that were shipped out. The other place I think we'll have to look very carefully here in the state is on rhododendrons because that's also a known host. The other thing is that this fungus can be soil-borne. So anything coming out of that nursery could potentially have been contaminated. So if you see anything that looks odd in terms of leaf symptoms, unfortunately the leaf symptoms caused by *Phytophthora ramorum* pretty non-descript. The major diagnostic symptoms are in the trunks of oaks you get large bleeding cankers. If you see anything that's odd, please send a sample. Double-bag it in Ziploc bags. Put it in the first bag, decontaminate the bag and your hands and then put it in the second bag. Pack it up and send it to us and let us know you want it tested for sudden oak death. We will do this testing free of charge. There's no cost involved. We need to know if this organism is here in the state. The sooner we find it the more likely we'll be able to keep it under control. I don't remember white oak being on the list, but northern red oak is one I believe is on the host list. There were also specimens in Europe that were found infected.

### **Conifers**

- Root rot (*Pythium*, *Rhizoctonia*, *Fusarium*) on pine, red cedar, spruce (including white), yew
- Charcoal rot (*Macrophomina phaseolina*) on pine
- Cytospora canker (*Leucocytospora kunzei*) on Colorado blue spruce
- Sphaeropsis tip blight/canker (*Sphaeropsis sapinea*) on juniper, pine (including Austrian, Scots), spruce
- Phomopsis tip blight (*Phomopsis* sp.) on spruce (including blue)
- Rhizosphaera needle cast (*Rhizosphaera kalkhoffii*) on spruce (including blue, white)
- Spruce needle drop (*Setomelanomma holmii*?) on spruce (including Norway)
- Swiss needle cast (*Phaeocryptopus gaeumannii*) on Douglas-fir
- *Phragmotrichium* (nonpathogen) fruiting on spruce cone
- Urine damage on arborvitae
- Water stress on juniper, pine (including Austrian), spruce (including Black Hills, Norway, white)

### **Woody Ornamentals**

- Heart rot (*Phellinus* sp.) of oak
- Sphaeropsis canker (*Sphaeropsis* sp.) on crabapple
- Phomopsis canker (*Phomopsis* sp.) on oak (including white)

### **Herbaceous Ornamentals**

- Bacterial blight (*Xanthomonas campestris* pv. *pelargonii*) on geranium
- Pseudomonas leaf spot (*Pseudomonas* sp.) on *Phragmipedium* orchid
- Impatiens necrotic spot (impatiens necrotic spot virus) on *Nemesia*
- Ethylene injury on gerbera daisy and other miscellaneous greenhouse plants
- Chemical burn on miscellaneous greenhouse plants
- Iron/Manganese toxicity on geranium

### **Fruit Crops**

- Anthracnose (*Gloeosporium* sp.) on mango
- Scab (*Venturia inaequalis*) on apple
- Scab (*Elsinoe fawcettii*) on temple orange
- Phomopsis canker (*Phomopsis* sp.) on cherry
- Hail injury on cherry
- Iron deficiency on kumquat, grapefruit

### **Vegetable Crops**

- Fusarium dry rot (*Fusarium avenaceum*) on potato tubers
- Scab (*Streptomyces scabies*) on potato tubers
- Bacterial soft rot (*Erwinia carotovora*) on potato tubers
- Compression bruises on potato tubers
- Blackheart of potato tubers
- Ethylene injury on tomato
- Sandhill crane damage on potato tubers

### **Questions:**

I had a Master Gardener ask me about a foliar nematode. He was wondering where or what part of the plant it overwinters in? I thought it would be leaf litter but maybe it goes down to the root?

Typically leaf litter and then it can emerge and then crawl back up the plant and reinfect leaf tissue.

Does it get into the roots at all?

I'd have to check to see if it ever does. Typically it's more of a foliar pathogen. It's a little unusual for most of the nematodes; they tend to be root pathogens. But this one typically goes into the leaves.

How many reports have you had with that?

I have not seen any come through the clinic. There were some samples from the Milwaukee area that went into the Goodwin lab. The symptoms on hosta tend to

be relatively distinct because the nematode gets in the leaf tissue and gets delimited by the veins. It doesn't seem to be able to cross veins very easily, so you get long linear necrotic streaks down the length of the leaves. It's a relatively easy pathogen to look for actually. I can look for this particular nematode in the clinic. You take tissue from the edge of the necrotic tissue and float it in water. And usually if the nematode is there, it will come pouring out. There's usually a relatively high population.

Any chance to get a fact sheet on that one?

We have pictures and have talked about a fact sheet on that. It is on our list to do. We'll probably do it through the clinic rather than through Ann. How quickly do you need it?

It's not a rush. I've heard of it several times now.

We've had it on the list for quite a while now, and we have materials to use, it's just a matter of getting it written.

We got a call from someone who has a blue spruce. She thought it was growing about 10 feet from the waterline of the lake. She thinks the tree has been there 40-50 years maybe. It's old. She said it was dying from the top down. I asked what the coloring looked like at the top and she said brown. We've brainstormed and thought it might be drought, but it was so close to the lake. What are your thoughts?

I would suspect there is some sort of water deficiency there. Given that it is so close to the lake, I'm wondering if what happened is that there's been a fair amount of water in the root zone for a while that's allowed for the set up of some of the root rot fungi in the roots and then it may have gotten particularly stressed during the drought conditions during the summer and the summer before that's just compounded the problem.

I was wondering about that too. Wondering if it was the huge amount of water and then no water. I thought the water level may have possibly gone down.

That may be what's going on with that particular tree. We see in a lot of situations with conifers and other types of trees where we think that's going on where they've been in relatively wet areas maybe in an area that has a lot of heavy clay soil where they've traditionally been relatively wet and they've looked okay. My assumption is that probably there are some root rot fungi active in the root system of the plant, but when the soil is relatively saturated with water it doesn't make much of a difference because there's enough remaining root system there in order for the plant to get enough water but then if there is that root damage, and we go into a drought period, that's when the tree shows the stress.

A speaker I listened to last week on blue spruce, he indicated that the life expectancy is about 40-65 years here. So maybe it is that old and it's a factor.

Maybe it's just dead of old age.

The fact that it is dying from the top down makes me wonder if it is a root issue. The humidity issue, where I would expect that to show up a little more would be the start of some of the diseases like rhizosphaera and cytospora, which tend to hit the bottom of the tree first.

### **General Questions:**

I have a question about soil test results and recommendations. I ran into this last year and I'm running into it again. We send our soil samples Dairyland Labs in Arcadia because it is a couple bucks cheaper and have a courier to take them there. They say they use the same recommendations that UW labs are giving out. A couple things I'm finding, and tell me if the UW lab is different but, for one thing the turf results are not coming back with nitrogen recommendations. And also for garden vegetables, all our literature says that most garden vegetables grow at a pH neutral or slightly less. I know vegetables are in a range, green beans are little higher, but the guy in the lab was telling me tomatoes are more around 6.1, 6.2 something like that. I had a test result that came back 5.6 pH for turf, and they didn't even recommend lime. They claim they really are using the recommendations from UW labs.

What you might want to do is give the soil analysis lab a call and say that we've been using this other service, here are the recommendations, what do you think of that. Based on what they tell you, make a decision based on what they tell you about switching over.

Is anyone else getting for lawn and garden, turf with no nitrogen recommendation, just saying do what the bag says?

Yes, in Outagamie County, we send our soil samples to a private place. It's like a broken record on lawns and even on gardens. No they don't do nitrogen tests. They always recommend 0.2 pounds per 100 square feet. I know they don't do a nitrogen test, but it was coming back without even saying a nitrogen recommendation.

What I'm frustrated with is that these labs test soils for agriculture and they really have no clue as to how to recommend their fertilizer formulas and how to get them for homeowners.

The UW lab does give a nitrogen recommendation, just to clarify that. I've been happy with the soil test results at the UW lab.

Just for fun, you might want to send the same sample to both places and see what comes back.

Is there any reason why you're using the private labs versus the UW extension other than price and convenience?

No, the deal is that in the spring and fall, we have a courier so people can drop off their samples here and at one of our major garden centers, so that's a pretty convenient way of advertising it and people saving money. A soil test is \$12.

A turf test at Madison is about \$16. One thing I know that the soils lab here at Madison is really did put a lot of effort into fine tuning some work and recommendations for both garden vegetables and lawns. It will be interesting to see what kinds of reports we get back.

On another note here though, our literature says that vegetables like it just a little less than neutral, the pH, and is it true that most of them are liking it a little more towards 6.2 to 6.3? I know green beans like it a little higher, but...

The 6.2 is a general good for most everything. It's kind of a target area. You are right that there are some that do perform a little better in the higher areas. Most of the blueberry family and rhododendrons like it in the 5 range. But the 6.2 to 6.5 is kind of a general soil pH target.

If you are having scab problems on potatoes, then you need to drop the pH down to 5.5 or below.

Another reason I would encourage you to use the Soil lab is that they have just self-financed their own new building. They are now out of their double-wide trailer and have a nice facility out at the West Madison farm. They are looking for revenue to help them for their new building.

Do we have any varieties of turf that we would have a list of better varieties if you are searching for blends or turf seeds for home lawns or things like that, or are we pretty much stuck with whatever local places might happen to have on hand.

I would refer you to a couple of bulletins that John Stier has put together on establishing home lawns and in there he will have some suggested varieties for both the sunny and shady areas:

Growing Grass in Shade (A3700)  
Lawn Aeration and Topdressing (A3710)  
Lawn Establishment & Renovation (A3434)  
Lawn Fertilization (A2303)  
Lawn Maintenance (A3435)  
Sampling Lawn and Garden Soils for Soil Testing (A2166)

If you go to some of the sites that sell a little more product, you will find they have a better variety in some of those newer selections. One thing John will caution is that there is more to buying lawn seed than the cost. The cost factor and many times when it's relatively inexpensive, you get what you pay for. The other thing is once you decide on a turf grass variety for your lawn, when you're doing any patching projects, or anything else, try to stick with that same lawn mixture, otherwise you'll end up with lighter or darker green spots and other types of textures. Once you decide on a variety, be consistent and follow through with any changes in the areas.

You could give John a call to get more information about specific disease resistant varieties within seeds.

**Announcements:**

Phil and Brian are interested in updating the homeowner pesticide list that's currently on the Wisconsin Hort website. I would request from all county agents if you could enlist some of your Master Gardener volunteers to canvas the local garden stores and places where the homeowner pesticide products are available, if they could get us information what's available locally for you folks, we'll revise that list. I would guess in terms of a timetable, if you could have information to us within the next month or so, we'll try to get the list out by the 1<sup>st</sup> of June.

We need to know brand name and active ingredients.

Brian sent out an email and you should have received it, but we had a meeting with the people from UW publications and we will be numbering fact sheets on our own from now on. The current thought is to renumber them. We'll keep the same numbers but instead of X they'll be XHT. They will be an X-file, but coordinated by the Hort Team, that's what the HT is for. We will issue new numbers as folks get new fact sheets written.

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For suggestions or responses, please refer them to:

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