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### **Last Issue for 2000**

This is the last issue of the *Home, Yard & Garden Pest Newsletter* for 2000. If you have not already received one, you should soon receive a card for renewing your subscription for next year. The final issue contains an index to articles published in 2000 that should help you locate back-issue information. The 2001 issues will start in April.

Suggestions concerning the newsletter are always welcome. You can contact me about general newsletter concerns or any of the authors about particular pests and control suggestions. Author phone numbers are listed at the end of each newsletter. You can contact me, Phil Nixon, at (217)333-6650, or at 1103 Dornier Dr., Urbana, IL 61801. Thank you for your support. (*Phil Nixon*)

### **Winter Educational Opportunities**

Following are several educational meetings that are available in 2001 within and near Illinois. For the cost, these provide an inexpensive, easy way to stay up to date in your field. This is a partial list. Contact your local University of Illinois Extension office for other programs that may be useful to you. (*Phil Nixon*)

#### **Bedding Plant School—Belleville**

The Bedding Plant School will be held on January 5, 2001 at Southwestern Illinois College in Belleville, Illinois. Registration fee is \$10 payable at the door. For information, contact Ron Cornwell at (618)692-9434.

#### **Structural Pest Control Conference—West Lafayette**

The 65th Annual Purdue Pest Control Conference will be held January 8–12, 2001 at the Stewart Center, Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana. The conference addresses insect and other pests of buildings. Registration fee is \$275 before December 15 and includes all sessions and a trade show. Late registration is \$375, and there are 1-day educational session

passes as well. For more information, contact Susan Umberger at the Conference Division of Purdue University at (765)494-7217 or (800)359-2968, ext. 92U.

#### **Greenhouse Management Workshop—Peoria**

A greenhouse management workshop will be conducted on January 30, 2001 at the Brandywine Holiday Inn in Peoria, Illinois. This is an all-day workshop. The topics to be covered include insect identification and management, ways to improve performance of pest-control materials, disease identification and management, and fundamentals of plant nutrition. In addition, there will be a question-and-discussion session. For more information on the program and registration fee, contact Dr. Raymond A. Cloyd, University of Illinois, Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences. Phone (217)244-7218; fax (217)333-4777; email [rcloyd@uiuc.edu](mailto:rcloyd@uiuc.edu)

#### **Grounds Maintenance School—Collinsville**

The Southern Illinois Grounds Maintenance School will be held February 20-21, 2001 at the Gateway Convention Center in Collinsville, Illinois. The registration fee is \$50 and includes admission to all sessions and the trade show. To register and for more information, contact Denise at the Madison–St. Clair Extension office at (618)236-8600.

#### **Spanish Grounds Maintenance—Winfield**

A grounds maintenance program will be presented in Spanish on April 2, 2001 at Cantigny Gardens in Winfield, Illinois. Registration starts at 7:30 a.m., with presentations scheduled from 8 a.m. to 2 or 2:30 p.m. Registration fee is \$35. For details, contact Jim Schuster by phone at (708)352-0109 or fax at (708)352-0451.

## INSECTS

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### Wintering Insects

Every winter, when we have a particularly cold spell, warm up, or just when it's been normal and nothing else is happening in the world, I get calls from news reporters wanting predictions on the number of insects next year. I respond that if their weather forecasters can accurately predict the spring weather conditions, then I can predict the number of insects that are likely to be present. Of course, their response is always the same, that predicting the weather several months away is essentially impossible.

Many of the insect species that occur in Illinois range from Arkansas to Hudson Bay. They are adapted to a very wide range of weather conditions, so the winter has little effect on their numbers. Species such as bagworm, mimosa webworm, and elm leaf beetle that are more common farther south may be more numerous in northern Illinois after a couple of particularly warm winters. Other northern species such as cottony maple scale, honeysuckle aphid, birch leafminer, and imported willow leaf beetle may be more numerous in central Illinois after a series of cold winters and cooler summers.

Wet, cool springs tend to favor fungus development on plants and insects. Just as there are fungi that are specific to certain tree and shrub species, there are fungi that specifically attack insects. In wet weather, many insects succumb to fungus infections, particularly caterpillars and other larvae. In dry springs, more survive. Thus, if the spring weather pattern is known, one can usually predict the frequency of spring-occurring larvae such as eastern tent caterpillar, cankerworm, and European pine sawfly.

In general, winter and spring conditions that favor the survival of insects not only help pests survive but also their insect predators and parasites. So although there may be more caterpillars in a dry spring following a mild winter, there are also more parasitic wasps to attack them. When weather conditions have resulted in fewer pests, there are also fewer natural enemies. The result is that although some insects may be more numerous, most are similar in abundance from year to year. It's alerting you to those insects that are more numerous in one year than normal, as well as reminding you when insect pests are susceptible to control efforts, that helps make this newsletter worthwhile. (*Phil Nixon*)

## PLANT DISEASES

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### Hosta Disease Problems

In the last 3 years, I have seen the decline of several thriving hosta beds. I have also heard complaints from homeowners in the same regard. Horticulture specialists tell us that too much water or too much sun can cause hostas to decline. I am sure that is correct, but the situations reported to me and the few cases I have seen have not had a significant change in moisture or light. So what is the problem? Are they too crowded? Maybe in a few cases that is true, but the dieback should stabilize if that were the case because affected plantings are now very thin. The clinic has seen an increase in hosta problems in recent years, and listed here are a few disease problems that could be involved in the decline. Some have been very severe in isolated cases. Check your plants for symptoms now or mark your calendar to check for these problems in early spring.

**Anthracnose** is a fungal leaf disease that causes irregularly shaped white to tan spots on the leaves. Usually a brown border surrounds the affected area. The spots become torn and give the leaves a tattered appearance. If you examine the leaves with a hand lens the day after a rain, you can see little black hairs (named setae) of the fungus sticking out of the less obvious fruiting bodies. The causal fungus is a *Colletotrichum* species. The disease is common in warm, wet conditions, so if you can maintain good plant spacing you might see less anthracnose. Fungicides are an option if the disease is a chronic problem. If you choose to spray, initiate use of a protective fungicide starting as leaves begin to emerge and repeat throughout the wet season. Fungicides registered for this use include many of the copper fungicides. There may be other products registered. Read labels carefully to be certain the product is cleared for use on hosta to control anthracnose.

A very nasty crown rot of hosta has invaded Illinois and may be on the increase. The disease is called **Sclerotium blight** and is caused by a fungus called *Sclerotium rolfsii* cv *delphinii* (yes, it also occurs on delphinium). Look for sudden collapse of your plants, mushy leaf stems, a white fungal growth in a fan pattern on the lower leaves, and the presence of small, circular, tan, mustard seed-like fungal structures (sclerotia). The disease is very difficult to control. Although it was previously thought that this fungus could not survive Illinois winters, the pathogen has

shown otherwise, at least in protected locations and in mild winters. Current research in Iowa is looking into the parameters involved in winter survival of this fungus as well as some specific hosta cultivar reactions to infection by *Sclerotium*. As this information becomes available next year, we will keep you posted. At present the management of *Sclerotium* blight focuses on removing infected plants and soil (to 8" depth) from immediately around the plant. The sclerotia remain in the soil for a long time and serve as overwintering structures for future infection. Chemical control is difficult, but PCNB (terraclor) is registered on some perennials and may be used to stop disease spread. Check the label for crop registration before use. *Sclerotium* also appears to be able to grow in old bark mulch, so consider removing bark mulch from around the base of hostas or at least replacing it often. Coral bells, lamb's ear, and lady's mantle are plants suggested as suitable replacements of hostas if a less susceptible species is desired.

**Foliar nematodes** can also wreak havoc on hosta growth. These microscopic round worms cause necrosis between veins or in blocky appearing areas on the leaves. Eventually entire leaves and plants may die. These nematodes are found in the plant but not in the soil. The foliar nematodes are discussed in more detail in issue no. 16 of this newsletter. The nematodes spread from plant to plant in splashing water and may live over winter in protected crowns of perennial plants. There are no chemical controls available for this nematode. Avoid excessively wet foliage and close spacing of plants. Discard contaminated stock (take away in a plastic bag) and inspect new plants carefully. We have not seen foliar nematodes in retail hostas in Illinois, but this is a current concern in the green industry and a problem in many southern and eastern states. (*Nancy Pataky*)

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*Home, Yard, and Garden Pest Newsletter* is prepared by Extension specialists from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and the Illinois Natural History Survey. Information for this newsletter is gathered with the help of staff members, Extension field staff, and others. Karel Jacobs and Donna Danielson of The Morton Arboretum also provide information and articles.

Major authors are Phil Nixon, (217)333-6650, Fredric Miller, (708)352-0109, and Raymond Cloyd, (217)244-7218, entomologists; Nancy Pataky, (217)333-0519, plant pathologist; Bruce Paulsrud, (217)244-9646, pesticide applicator training; and Tom Voigt and David Williams, (217)333-0350, horticulturists. Phil Nixon is the executive editor of the *Home, Yard, and Garden Pest Newsletter*. This newsletter is written by faculty in the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences and the Department of Crop Sciences. The newsletter is edited by Erin Cler, typeset by Oneda VanDyke, and proofread by Phyllis Picklesimer, all of Information Technology and Communication Services.

For subscription information, phone (217)333-2666 or (800)345-6087, or e-mail [acesnews@uiuc.edu](mailto:acesnews@uiuc.edu). Web subscriptions are available (<http://www.ag.uiuc.edu/cespubs/hyg>).

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