

Number 18 - October 19, 2015

Last Issue for 2015

This is the last issue of the Home, Yard, and Garden Pest Newsletter for 2015. We plan to start 2016 issues around mid-April, depending on how early spring weather breaks, bringing diseases, weeds, and insect pests along with it. This issue includes an index of the articles written in the 18 issues of this year's newsletter.

Take advantage during the winter to update your knowledge and licensing by attending several of the educational sessions offered by University of Illinois Extension, professional organizations, and other entities in this and other states.
(Phil Nixon)

Plant Clinic Fungi-tastic Season Wrap-Up

It's been an interesting year at the University of Illinois Plant Clinic! With the excessively wet spring and mild summer temperatures, 2015 could be called the Year of the Fungi. Bacterial and viral diseases were less common this year, probably due to the relative lack of heavy summer storms (most bacteria infect plants through wound openings) and the wet spring (most viruses spread via insect vectors, and insect populations were down probably from fungal diseases that attack insects). Damping off, root rots, and crown rots were more common than normal this spring and

persisted later into the growing season than normal, while fungal leaf spots were everywhere to be seen.

Rhizoctonia, *Pythium*, and *Phytophthora* are common fungal and fungal-like root pathogens that were even more prevalent this year. *Pythium* and *Phytophthora* cause damping off and root rots and are favored by cool, wet weather, of which we had plenty. These pathogens were observed on woody and herbaceous ornamental plants, fruits, vegetables, and field crops. *Rhizoctonia* is most famous for causing Brown Patch and Yellow Patch in turfgrass. This year we saw a lot of those diseases, and we saw *Rhizoctonia* affecting ornamentals such as bachelor's buttons and coneflowers.

Fungal foliar spots were everywhere this year. Forty-one of 400 woody tree samples were confirmed with anthracnose, a common leaf spot caused by various fungi. While we normally see anthracnose in spring, we saw more samples with it this year and we were finding it later into the season. For most trees, this disease is not considered a serious problem. However, in sycamore and dogwood trees, anthracnose can pose a threat to the overall health of the tree. Anthracnose was also found on herbaceous ornamentals, including hosta and English ivy.

Cercospora and *Septoria*, two common fungi known for causing leaf symptoms on field crops and vegetables, were

found affecting herbaceous and woody ornamentals including creeping jenny and garden mums (*Septoria*) and peonies and dogwood (*Cercospora*). Unusual foliar issues also showed up: we identified aerial blights caused by both *Rhizoctonia* and *Pythium*. These blights only occur in situations with very high humidity and low air movement. The *Rhizoctonia* was found on an ornamental ground cover, while the *Pythium* was affecting turfgrass.

Another odd turf problem seen this year was nigrospora blight. It's rarely seen in Illinois, and only one sample was identified. More common problems on turf included rust, anthracnose, powdery mildew, ascochyta blight, and dollar spot.

Boxwood blight is a federally regulated pathogen that was a concern this year due to the movement of plants and the favorable weather conditions. It was not found in Illinois, though a number of common pests were, including the insects boxwood leafminer and boxwood psyllid, and the diseases *Volutella* blight and *Fusarium* blight.

We saw a large number of stress issues in woody plants. Fungal cankers, nutrient chlorosis in deciduous trees, and tip blights in conifers were the most common stress-related issues seen in 2015. Many trees are still suffering the effects of the two summers of drought back-to-back a few years ago, and the recent harsh winters and excessively wet spring have caused substantial amounts of stress to both newly-established and mature trees. Depending on the problem, management may be available that targets just the symptom or the pathogen, but the best management includes reducing stress when possible.

Both pine and spruce trees are affected with needle blights, which are also considered stress diseases. *Diplodia* and *Dothistroma* fungal diseases on pine needles were very common this year. Also common were *Rhizosphaera* and *Stigmina*, two fungi which affect spruce needles. Of the 15 samples confirmed with *Rhizosphaera* and 14 samples confirmed with *Stigmina*, 8 samples were confirmed with both.

Oak Wilt continues to be a disease of concern. This year, samples from 8 counties tested positive for the fungus. The Plant Clinic has confirmed samples from 35 counties across Illinois with Oak Wilt over the last several years. A proper diagnosis is important as the disease can quickly spread from tree to tree, and it is considered a fatal disease. While infected trees should be removed to reduce the potential spread of the fungus, it is best to wait until the tree is dormant. Proper packaging and shipping is key for an accurate diagnosis. If you suspect Oak Wilt, please refer to the Plant Clinic website for sampling guidelines or contact us.

Samples from two new counties were confirmed with Bur Oak Blight, an emerging fungal disease of Bur Oaks. A sample from a third new county is suspected of being infected with Bur Oak Blight. So far, the disease appears to be limited to northern and western Illinois, though the pathogen was only recognized in 2012 and we continue to keep an eye on this disease.

For more information about the University of Illinois Plant Clinic, including where to send samples and how to contact us, please see our website: <http://web.extension.illinois.edu/plantclinic>. (Diane Plewa)

The Return of the Unwanted House Guest: Brown Marmorated Stink Bug

It's the time of year when my email is flooded with reports of brown marmorated stink bugs. Yep, it's a sure sign fall is upon us.

As the growing season winds down, the temperatures begin to cool, and the days get shorter, several insects take to hanging out on the sides of houses, garages, and window sills. While they may appear to be warming themselves in the sun, these wily little creatures are most likely scoping out a nice place to spend the winter months. The days of boxelder bugs and multicolored Asian ladybeetles are not over, but there is a new house guest in several parts of the state.

The brown marmorated stink bug has been present in Illinois for quite some time (feel free to use the search engine on the Hone, Yard, and Garden Newsletter site to read more about them), but in recent years they are becoming much more noticeable in several areas of the state and a real nuisance as well.

A great resource for homeowners is a publication from Cornell University. It's important to remember that it is geared towards homeowners in the east. While these management strategies are applicable in Illinois, the situations requiring treatment of the landscape outside the home to decrease the number of BMSB home invaders has been quite small. [The Unwelcome House Guest: Brown Marmorated Stink Bug--A Guide for Residents, Property Managers, and Pest Management Professionals is available at \[http://www.nysipm.cornell.edu/factsheets/buildings/BMSB_FS.pdf\]\(http://www.nysipm.cornell.edu/factsheets/buildings/BMSB_FS.pdf\)](http://www.nysipm.cornell.edu/factsheets/buildings/BMSB_FS.pdf)

Currently, the known distribution of this insect in Illinois is limited. Homeowners are our primary source of information during the fall and spring. We are very interested in where these insects may be and continue to try to determine where they are in Illinois.

If you believe you have BMSB, we would be very interested in looking at it. Suspect stink bugs may be sent to Kelly Estes, 1816 S. Oak St., Champaign, IL 61820. Please put stink bugs in a crush-proof container (pill bottle, check box, etc). You can also send a photo to kcook8@illinois.edu for preliminary screening if you wish. (*Kelly Estes*)

Magnolia Scale

Magnolia scale is common this year in the northern half of Illinois and occurs sporadically in the rest of the state. Heavy populations and damage was noticeable in early summer when treatment was less effective than now. It attacks star magnolia, *Magnolia stellata*; cucumbertree magnolia, *M. acuminata*; saucer magnolia, *M. soulangiana*; and lily magnolia, *M. quinquepeta*. It is usually not a serious problem to native magnolias, although it can be numerous on evergreen magnolia, *M. grandiflora*.

Magnolia scale females can be very large for scales, about 1/2 inch in diameter. They range from yellowish to brownish, from oval to a roundish blob. Magnolia scale produces large amounts of honeydew, resulting in shiny, sticky leaves, as well as sticky sidewalks and cars underneath infested trees. Tree sap is low in nitrogen, so soft scales consume great quantities of it, separate out much of the water and nitrogen, and excrete most of

the remainder as the concentrated sap, or light syrup, called honeydew.

Mature females at this time of year produce living young. These first-stage nymphs, or crawlers, are oval and gray, with a reddish brown ridge running down the back. Each crawler has two white, waxy spots, one on each side. Crawlers mass on the undersides of 1- and 2-year-old twigs for the winter. From the time that they emerge from the female until they molt to the second nymphal instar in late April or early May, they are vulnerable to insecticide sprays. In early June, they molt again to the third-instar nymphal stage and are deep purple. Heavily infested twigs and branches appear purple and rough from high scale numbers. The nymphs then produce white, powdery wax that covers their bodies. As they mature to adults, the white wax wears away, being heaviest on the edges of the scale. There is one generation per year.

An insecticidal spray of acephate (Orthene), insecticidal soap, or summer spray oil at this time controls the crawlers. The same sprays at bud break in the spring are also effective. With the insecticidal soap and summer spray oil, be sure to get good coverage, particularly on the twig undersides, where the crawlers will be most numerous. As these are contact insecticides, the insects not hit directly with the soap or oil spray will probably survive; so thorough coverage is essential. (*Phil Nixon*)

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