

How to help defoliated trees recover

NEWARK, DEL. — Defoliation of shade trees by gypsy moths and other leaf-feeding insects isn't usually considered a serious problem, says University of Delaware extension horticulturist Charles Dunham. When trees lose their leaves early in the season, they soon put out new ones, he says. But foliage loss does reduce growth. It also affects flower and fruit bud formation.

The problem is more serious when defoliation occurs two or three years in a row. If a tree is under another stress as well—such as drought—it may go into a general decline. When that happens, dieback and even death may result, says Dunham.

Defoliation is a more serious problem with evergreens like pines which can't replace lost needles, so it should be prevented if at all possible. Injury to evergreens is directly related to the extent of needle loss.

There are a number of ways to minimize the effects of defoliation on deciduous trees, says Dunham. Basically, these involve reducing other stress factors and encouraging rapid generation of new leaves.

Your first concern should be to make sure affected trees get enough water. This is especially important during periods of dry weather. Apply enough water to soak soil in the root zone to a depth of 12 to 18 inches. This means putting on about a gallon of water for each square foot of soil area under the tree canopy. Water every two weeks until leaves are fully developed. Take care to prevent runoff, so that what you put on soaks into the ground.

Regrowth of leaves can be hastened and stimulated by feeding trees with a fertilizer high in nitrogen. This is especially important for valuable ornamentals and trees weakened by other stress factors in addition to defoliation. For rapid response, apply the fertilizer either in liquid form to the root system, or as a foliar spray to developing leaves.

To root feed, dissolve soluble fertilizers like 20-20-20 or 30-10-10 in water and apply them with a root feeder in the area under the tree canopy. Use a rate of 2 pounds of fertilizer for 100 gallons of water. Apply 5 gallons of solution for each inch of trunk diameter. Do this as soon as possible after defoliation.

Expanding young leaves have a high capacity for nutrient absorption, says Dunham. Special mixtures that contain nitrogen in the form of urea are required for foliar feeding. These spray feed formulations may have ratios like 30-10-10. Dissolve them at the rate of 2 pounds of fertilizer per 100 gallons of water, and apply to leaves and branches as a spray to

the point of runoff. Apply when new leaves are about half expanded. Repeat once or twice as needed.

Trees which are in active, vigorous growth at the time of defoliation will suffer less than those which are already under stress from other causes, says Dunham.

Black fly

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technical committee for the Northeast Agricultural Experiment Station black fly regional project. The committee meets once a year to evaluate research findings from the different states and set a course for future research. By collecting as much information as they can on the biology and distribution of this insect, identifying as many species as possible, evaluating its impact on humans, domestic animals and wildlife, studying its population dynamics and developing methods for rearing it in the laboratory, the group hopes in time to develop safe, effective controls for the black fly. At present there are no effective insecticides cleared for use against it.

Although none of the states participating in the project has instituted an organized black fly control program, Lake says one material—a strain of the biologic insecticide *Bacillus thuringiensis* called *israelensis* (BTI)—shows great promise on black fly larvae. Though the material has not been registered for black fly control, it has been shown to have little adverse effect on other aquatic insects or invertebrates. (One of the few other organisms it does kill is the mosquito larva—in fact, Lake and fellow researchers at the University of Delaware are testing BTI for that use.)

Until an effective control program is available for black flies, people who plan to be outdoors where this pest is active will have to seek relief from attack with an insect repellent, the entomologist says.

To speed local research efforts, Lake asks Delaware residents troubled with black flies this spring to call him at 738-2526.

Chester Co. milk promotion

AVONDALE — Today a milk promotion is scheduled to take place at the Avondale Grange in conjunction with the tricentennial celebration being held all day in Avondale. The Chester County Milk Promotion Committee is sponsoring the milk promotion, and it will get under way at 10 a.m. and run until 3 p.m.

On hand for the celebration will be a live Jersey cow and calf, also a cow of uncertain origins and a

different color, a pink cow!

Persons attending the event will be given the opportunity to test their knowledge of dairy science, by taking a brief quiz. Anyone who answers the questions correctly will be given a coupon for a discount at Landhope Farm dairy stores.

Cheese and butter samples will be given away, so don't miss the fun, get out today for the celebration.

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Shady Breeze Farm, RFD #2, Myerstown, Pa. The Daniel B. Horning family discussing their farm records with Hamilton Bank representatives (L to R) Merritt J. Marks, Senior Vice President and Regional Administrator for the Lebanon Region, Mary Horning, Daniel Horning and Randy L. Brandt, Area Manager of the Richland/Newmanstown Cluster. (Standing) Martin Horning. The Horning's 72-acre farm operation includes 118 steers along with the growing of produce to sell at their stand on the farm.



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