

Dogwoods Disappearing From Landscapes

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — Spring is a time when many people enjoy the blooms of ornamental trees and shrubs. But one popular flowering tree is disappearing from many landscapes.

Since the late 1970s, dogwood trees native to the eastern United States have suffered from stress and disease. The resulting decline in dogwood health and populations has made the plant's spectacular white floral display a rare sight in some areas.

"Scientists believe the primary cause is a fungus called *Discula*," says Dr. Gary Moorman, associate professor of plant pathology in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences.

"It's thought that the fungus was inadvertently brought to the U.S. in the 1970s," he says. "It since has spread throughout the range of the native dogwoods. Because these trees have never before been exposed to the fungus, they are especially susceptible to attack."

The area affected by the decline ranges from southern Maine to northern Alabama. Trees in exposed sites seem most susceptible, but forest dogwoods also are dying.

Several symptoms are characteristic of dogwood decline.

Twigs and lower branches die. Cankers, or abnormally roughened areas, form on twigs, branches and trunks. Dogwood borers attack the weakened tree. Water sprouts develop at the tree's base, then die. Tree growth slows. Eventually, the tree may die.

Discula is one of several fungi that cause a disease known as anthracnose. "It can produce brown spots up to one-fourth-inch in diameter on leaves," Moorman says. "Smaller, reddish-brown spots may pepper portions of the leaf or extend along veins."

"Large brown blotches of dead tissue may appear on leaf tips, along the margin of leaves or between the veins," he says. "Leaves on branch tips may be completely blighted and stay attached over winter. Lower twigs and branches may die."

The fungus overwinters in infected twigs and leaves that remain on the tree and in infected fallen leaves.

"This fungus also has been found on dogwood seeds," says Moorman. "Studies are under way to determine whether migrating songbirds are eating infected seeds, then spreading the fungus along their migration routes. Researchers also are looking at possible insect transmission of the

disease."

Moorman says steps can be taken to protect healthy trees and to save trees not yet severely affected by decline:

- Promote tree vigor. During dry summer and autumn weather, water once every seven to 10 days to supply one inch of water. Ferti-

lize moderately in the spring. Do not apply excessive nitrogen. Do not injure trees with lawnmowers.

- Remove sources of fungus. Rake and remove fallen leaves and twigs. Prune and destroy water sprouts and dead twigs and branches. Do this only during dry weather when plant surfaces are

dry. Remove severely affected trees.

- Protect trees from pests. If necessary, use fungicides to control anthracnose. In May and early June, control dogwood borer. When using pesticides, be sure to read and follow all directions and safety precautions on labels.

Maryland County Searches For Pageant Entries

WASHINGTON CO., Md. — The Washington County Dairy Princess Committee is searching for contestants for its annual pageant.

As part of a new state program, they will also be asking any young ladies between 13 and 16 years old who would like to represent the county's dairy industry. With the exception of age, dairy maids must meet all the same requirements as a princess.

Dairy maids will perform similar duties as the dairy princess, assisting her throughout the year. There will be no competition for the "princess-to-be's" at the area or state level.

Princesses make school and grocery store promotions, speak to

farm and non-farm groups and appear on radio and television. They often make appearances at sporting events and fairs. Regional princesses participate in a training seminar and will compete in the state pageant Tuesday, July 26, in Frederick.

Qualifications have changed for the princess program. Contestants may be the daughter of one of the following: a dairy farmer, a dairy farm manager or herdsman or someone employed in a dairy-related industry (farm store, dairy cooperative, DHIA supervisor, feed supplier, veterinarian, milk inspector, etc.). Candidate may

also be employed herself as one of the above or the owner of at least one dairy animal or enrolled in the dairy foods project in 4-H or FFA.

Contestants must be 16 years old as of the contest year and will not reach her 22nd birthday by December 31, of the contest year.

For more information and an application, contact Carolyn Downey at 8929 Downsville Pike, Williamsport, MD 21795; 223-7148 or Christine Forsythe at 10224 Downsville Pike, Hagersstown MD 21795; 582-4884. Application deadline is May 16, 1994.



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