

From The Roots Up

The Shrub & Tree Newsletter Of Prestige Shrub & Tree, Ltd.
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- Spring Pruning
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This is your third visit for 2024. Remember you can easily go to the Prestige website by browsing

www.prestigestt.com

We will be applying a systemic and contact insecticide to a specific list of plants to target a wide array of insect pests. Fungicide and miticide will also be applied as needed to suppress any disease and mite issues we encounter on your trees and shrubs. Our spray mixes always include a special additive which reduces breakdown by ultraviolet light and makes the spray very resistant to removal by rain or irrigation once the spray has dried. Normally the spray requires about fifteen minutes to dry. For this round, two different systemic insecticides are being used that have slightly different modes of action. This gives us more versatility, especially when dealing with hard to control pests such as euonymus and cottony scales. Boxwood blight is still a concern and is a devastating disease. (No, it has not gone away and there is no indication that it ever will!)

2024 has started out a couple of inches above average in rainfall. Although our rainfall seems to be adequate, keep in mind because we don't have a water table in Atlanta and our rainfall is either used by plants, evaporates or travels through our soil and eventually running off the hard pan clay or rock beneath our soil, rainfall is not cumulative and is not stored in the soil. Once the rain stops, it doesn't take long for the soil to lose its moisture. It is important to keep track of the rainfall we are receiving by utilizing a rain gauge. If you have not yet brought your irrigation system on line, go ahead and get it turned on and checked out.

Have your irrigation company check the controller, valves and heads and also check for proper coverage. Be sure you do not have irrigation heads buried under soil or blocked by shrubbery that has grown to envelop the irrigation head. Relocate any heads that may be blocked and readjust heads that are not operating properly.

Maintain your one time per week irrigation regimen if we are not receiving adequate rain to grow healthy plants. This helps the plants adjust to dry periods we often experience in spring and periodically through the summer and fall.

One inch of irrigation per week is a guideline. If your plants are staying wet then you may not need to water every seven days. Practice "as needed" irrigation and only water when the soil begins to dry. It is usually best to set your irrigation on manual unless you are out of town or have a rain sensor installed so as to minimize over watering.

Pruning Out Winter Damage And Spring Pruning

With the cold weather of winter behind us, it is now safe to prune out any winter damage on your trees and shrubs. Pruning out areas of damage will temporarily leave a hole, but the plant, if healthy enough, will put on new growth to fill in the void. Severely damaged or older plants may not respond to a severe restorative pruning and will need to be replaced.

For shrubs and small trees, pruning back to the green wood encourages the plant to initiate new growth. If there is no green wood above the ground, prune the plant back to the crown or base of the

plant and wait until June to see if it sprouts any new growth. If there is no regrowth by June, replace the plant.

Spring time Pests

Rose Rosette disease is still active in the landscape. For the most part, we see knockout roses as one of the main hosts though all rose species are susceptible to this disease to some degree.

This disease is caused by a virus and is spread by a small vector mite (not spider mites). The virus is not controllable and cannot be prevented, although we feel our basic spray program does slow the infection and spread since the sprays do suppress the vector mite. The only remedy to reduce the spread is to remove the infected rose plant and bag or burn the debris. We will let you know if we see this on your roses but the only course of action is unfortunately to remove the infected plants to minimize the spread to other roses in the vicinity. You can see photos of the effect of this disease at our website. Look up Rose Rosette Disease on the Pest, Problems And Solutions page or cruise to this web page.

<http://www.prestigestt.com/title/R/158/PestOrProblem.aspx>

Exobasidium Gall (the spongy growth on azaleas and camellias) is very showy and we have already seen this pop up in plantings. It is not effectively controlled with fungicide and causes only cosmetic damage. The prescription for management is to simply prune or pick off the affected leaves and discard them in the trash.

Whitefly populations have already been active in plantings again this year because they have been increasing

exponentially on non treated properties. The nymphs will soon morph into adults and will be very noticeable in the landscape. Even though we treat for the white flies and are protecting the plants, you may still see adults flying around the plants as they attempt to avoid the insecticide applications. THIS DOES NOT MEAN THE WHITEFLIES HAVE RE-INFESTED YOUR PLANTS. Since we have systemic insecticide in the plants, the plants are protected from the adults and nymphs and any feeding or egg laying activity.

Scale is also active and populations may be heavier than usual this year, especially oleander scale.

Powdery mildew will still develop as our consistent rainfall diminishes and we become drier. We treat for powdery mildew during our regular application visits but to further reduce the problem, simply hose off the leaves routinely each day between our sprays.

We routinely treat all these pests and any other problem we encounter on your ornamental trees and shrubs at each visit. Most plants, even when on a pest management program, will have some degree of pest activity. Once these populations increase, it takes quite a while to bring these pests under control. **A healthy, properly watered and maintained plant can withstand attack by pests much better than a weak plant.**

Evergreen Leaf Drop!

Many folks are very surprised that plants such as pines, conifers, Southern Magnolia and tree form hollies actually slough leaves in the spring each year. You may also notice azaleas, hollies and gardenia leaves turning yellow and dropping this time of year. Though these plants are considered evergreen, they do need to discard older, non-functioning or damaged leaves to make room for new leaves. You will also see new leaves at the tips that indicate the branch is not damaged. This process happens each year to varying degrees. If the plants have endured a previous stress

such as heat, drought or freeze damage, they may drop quite a few leaves but again, this is normal and an actual indicator of a healthy plant adjusting, recovering or rejuvenating!

Black Twig Borer

Each season we have a lot of twig borer cases in the Atlanta area. Many magnolias still had the tell tale hanging and dead branch tips that had not fallen off even into this spring. This does not necessarily mean the trees are under another attack. Many times if the damage is too high to prune out, the damaged branches can stay hanging in the tree for weeks or even months until removed by a strong wind. Twig Borers are boring insects that seek out stressed trees for the purpose of laying eggs within the wood of the stems. In the Atlanta area, all types of magnolia seem to be one of their favorites though they do affect other trees as well and depending on the weather, usually is seen anytime through the summer season. Unlike other borers that bore into the main limbs and the trunks of trees often killing sections or whole trees, Black Twig Borers stick to the outer twigs of the trees. These beetles find stressed trees since stressed trees can not offer quite as much of a defense against attack as healthy trees and bore into the twigs causing small holes in the wood. The adult female then lays her eggs in the end of the bored out gallery. To feed her young, she leaves a sticky substance called ambrosia. This food source clogs up the xylem and phloem of the twig effectively cutting it off from water and nutrients killing the branch from the entry site outward.

Control of these pests can be tricky and require a bit of luck. While we do check for these pests and try to preemptively treat for them, it is still a matter of luck if we succeed as the borers have to be active in the area for us to get a kill. The borers do not eat the wood they bore into therefore rendering systemic insecticide options useless. Since they do not ingest the wood, they must come in contact with

our sprays to be controlled. Our regular treatments reduce their numbers but they can become problematic between visits. Fortunately, these pests do not do much damage to the tree though it can be unsightly leaving multiple branches with dead tips on the your otherwise lovely magnolia tree. If the damage is within reach, prune out the dead wood. This will promote new growth. Also, by pruning the dead wood out, it will make it easier for you to spot new damage signaling a return of these beetles. Lastly, since these beetles seek out stressed trees, use this as a signal that you should check the moisture under your trees and keep them hydrated (5 gallons water per 1” trunk diameter per week). Many times we assume that since we are getting plenty of rain the magnolias should be getting plenty of water. Large trees such as the magnolias and cypress trees can catch much of the rainfall in their foliage blocking it from getting to the root zone. Actively checking soil moisture under the trees is needed to see just how moist the soil is under the canopy. You may be surprised just how dry the soil is even after a sufficient rainfall.