

From The Roots Up

The Shrub & Tree Newsletter Of Prestige Shrub & Tree, Ltd.
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This is your fourth shrub and tree care visit for the year.

Since we have put out systemic insecticides at rounds 2 and 3, our goal for this application is spot checking plants and treating them as necessary for both insect and disease issues that may have come up. 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 twenty minutes to dry.

Our rainfall averages each month from January through May have actually been above average averaging about .5" above our monthly averages. So far in late June it seems as though we have gotten rain everyday. As much rain as we have been receiving it is easy to forget how we can quickly move to the opposite extreme. Last summer June was dry while July provided 14" of rain. The rest of the summer was exceptionally hot and dry with the exception of the hurricane in late September. Many plants went into drought stress with the drier air and little rain. In times of drought and high temperatures, we need to DOUBLE our watering for the week. Instead of 1" per week, you will need to water 1" twice per week to provide

adequate hydration to protect shrubs and trees from drought stress. Once a plant goes into drought stress for too long it can be difficult to revive it. Plants have a way of covering drought damage only to display its effects later the next spring or summer long after the drought period has been forgotten. Some plants don't put on as many flowers or bloom at all. Some plants will show die back in their branches.

Remember, when we experience drought conditions and experience 95 degree temperatures for an extended amount of time, you can expect to see this kind of damage next spring. As we move into the summer months we may settle down to our normal summer time pattern of occasional, scattered afternoon thunderstorms.

In each newsletter, we remind everyone that if we are not getting consistent rainfall you have to **maintain your one time per week irrigation** regimen to grow healthy plants. We cannot predict whether we will have adequate rainfall in any given year so stay vigilant!

Check all your trees and shrubs and be sure they are all getting adequate moisture. The soil should be moist to a depth of 4-6". Though your irrigation system appears to be working, you need to be sure that all the plants are receiving enough water on their entire root area to avoid root damage and subsequent loss of leaves and branches.

Newly installed landscapes

In speaking about the importance of watering our landscapes during times of drought, we thought it important to remind everyone about their new landscapes. When installed, new landscapes can be exciting giving your property a new

look. During this time everyone is always vigilant in taking care of the new plants. This often gets put on the back burner once it looks as though the new landscape has become established. It is important to remember that new plants and especially trees need about 3 seasons to fully become acclimated to their environment and to be able to survive dry spells. Making sure these plants are adequately hydrated and not forgotten must be carried past the first season past installation and benefit from year round attention until they truly become established.

Internal Browning On Conifers

As we move into the hotter and drier weather, you may see the inside needles of your conifers turn brown. This occurs in plants any needle bearing plants. This tends to happen every summer as we move into the dog days of summer. The internal needle loss is a survival mechanism of all conifers which include Leyland cypress, hemlock, Italian cypress, cryptomeria, cedar, arborvitae, western cedar, and deodora. Once the trees move into heat stress they will begin to slough off all the extra growth they can no longer support. Although these symptoms look like disease, insect or mite activity, in almost every single case, this has to do with the soil becoming too dry at some point. This can occur in the winter months as well as the summer months but higher temperatures drying the soil are the most likely culprit. Shade can also cause thinning, but the browning is water related.

Unfortunately, once the needles have fallen off, they will not grow back. The final effect is a plant that

is much more open than when it was first planted. This thinning is not what you want if these plants are being used for privacy. The key to reducing the thinning and needle drop is to monitor the watering and ensure the plants are receiving 1" of water per week applied one time per week resulting in soil that is moist to a depth of 6". In the case of single trees, the tree will want 5 gallons of water per 1" of trunk diameter. So if you have a tree that is 5" in diameter, it will need 25 gallons of water per week to stay hydrated. You will have to check the irrigation system and be sure that the emitters are clear and functional or, if the trees are being watered by overhead irrigation, ensure the sprinklers are actually watering on all sides of the tree. This is where drip emitter systems excel, but even they will fail if you do not provide for the entire root mass. Keep in mind rainfall does not necessarily make it to the ground when falling through the very thick foliage of big evergreen trees. Most of the rain will evaporate instead of benefiting the tree. If these trees don't have irrigation, you may need to set up a hose or sprinkler under the canopy to provide water throughout. In periods of exceptionally high temperatures you may have to water 2 times per week as the trees simply use more water. Overwatering also can cause thinning and needle drop so be certain you do not leave the trees sitting in puddles of water.

Summer Pests

With summer in full swing, these are some of the pests that you may find on your landscapes. White flies will start to become more active but your plants such as gardenias are PROTECTED AGAINST INFESTATION BECAUSE OF OUR PREVIOUS SYSTEMIC TREATMENTS applied at round 3. Even though you may have adults flying around they will not harm your plants. We can never predict which pest will make an appearance in any given year, but as we move into July we will see the usual increase in pest

activity.

Powdery mildew is always a summer visitor (roses, crepes, euonymous, dogwoods etc.) and will become worse as the rains become scarce.

Sooty Mold is a sign of aphid or scale activity. Sooty mold is a mold spore ubiquitous in our environment just looking for a host. As aphids and scale feed on your plants, they produce honey dew excretions coating leaves below. You may need to look up to determine the source of the honey dew. Overhanging trees may be to blame! Our sprays help minimize the aphid and scale activity on the plants therefore control the formation of sooty mold. Although the sooty mold may linger long after the scale and aphid populations are controlled, it will eventually breakdown and dissipate.

Leaf spot on hydrangeas, Indian hawthorns, roses and other plants are treated at each application but can be a challenge to control especially late in the summer. Removal of dropped leaves will help avoid reinfection. Avoiding over-the-top watering if possible can reduce leaf wetness thereby discouraging leaf spot development. Drought stress can also exacerbate leaf spot issues in these plants.

Black Twig Borer

Its that time of year again! Be on the look out for effects of black twig borer on magnolias, maples and dogwood trees. As our weather heats up and rain gets scarce, trees need 5 gallons of water per 1" diameter each week to stay hydrated. If the trees stress due to getting dry, the plants release stress hormones. 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. Unlike other borers that bore into the main limbs and the trunks of trees often killing sections or whole trees, 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 ambrosia works to clog 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 since the borers have to be active in the area for us to get a kill. The borers do not ingest the wood they bore into therefore rendering systemic insecticide options useless and 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 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).