

# Pat's Corner: Bugs and More Bugs



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These days it seems like I go from room to room and end up asking myself "what did I come in here for"? I also can't remember people's names, but with a bit of a reminder I can usually remember our conversation about plants. I mention this because I had a small opening story to tell and now that I am typing I forgot what it was.

So, let's just dive in to another thrilling episode on bugs. Keep in mind that bugs are part of the circle of life and not all bugs are bad or harmful to your plants. Many bugs eat each other or are food for other creatures. Some only cause cosmetic damage, and we have to judge what is an acceptable level of damage that we can live with. Proper bug identification is the key to the proper treatment and timing of that treatment. Identify before your treat!

You are probably noticing that the Canada Red Chokecherry trees are getting their annual round of webworms that could be one of at least 3 species. Each of these overwinters as larvae

or eggs on the bark or on the ground and you usually don't notice them until they are actively feeding and you see the webbing. If your chokecherry tree is healthy the caterpillars are generally cosmetic and won't kill the tree. If you are checking your tree looking for caterpillars, you may notice some stickiness, a sign they are active. Before they make a tent, spray with Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*) or Spinosad. Both options are eco-groovy and work on a variety of caterpillars and larvae. If they do make a tent try to get the spray inside the tent. You can also cut out the branch with the tent and bag it up for the trash. Good yard clean up practices, and fall and or spring applications of horticultural oil can also help.

We have also had some questions about Honeylocust trees turning yellow and losing leaves early. The two most likely problems causing the early leaf drop could be not enough water or one of several other pests. Check your watering!! Then check out this link for a diagnostic guide from the Missoula County Extension Plant Diagnostic Database: <http://missoulaeduplace.org/honeylocust.html> This



interactive guide allows you to look for symptoms and then click to the related pests for specific identification and treatment. They recommend horticultural oil spray as the buds are first breaking in the spring. Be sure to bookmark the Database for future reference. It is the resource that I use from my much earmarked Master Gardener Manual and the website has color photos that help with identification.

Folks are starting to notice galls on hackberry and oak. A gall that forms on a tree leaf is the tree's reaction to a variety of insects that lay eggs on the leaf. When the eggs hatch and the larvae start feeding on the leaf, the tree forms the gall we see and it seems to work to protect the insect. The hackberry gall is generally referred to hackberry nipple gall (yes, it is OK to snicker) and the oak gall can be a variety of different kinds. Galls are another example of cosmetic damage but heavy infestations to young trees needs treatment consideration. The Missouri Botanical Garden has a great discussion: <http://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/gardens-gardening/your-garden/help-for-the-home-gardener/advice-tips-resources/pests-and-problems/other/galls/galls-on-trees.aspx> Again, identification of the bug and its life cycle directs you to the best treatment if treatment is necessary.

This past wet spring has brought out more fungal leaf spot disease than we are used to seeing. Lindens seem to be affected this year. The University of Illinois Extension has a good discussion of leaf spot:

[https://web.extension.illinois.edu/forestry/publications/pdf/forest\\_health/UIUC\\_Leaf\\_Spot\\_Diseases\\_of\\_Trees.pdf](https://web.extension.illinois.edu/forestry/publications/pdf/forest_health/UIUC_Leaf_Spot_Diseases_of_Trees.pdf) Leaf spot is another of those cosmetic problems that may or may not need treatment. If the tree is in poor health treatment may be necessary and identification of the problem is necessary for the correct treatment. Cultural practices, correct watering and keeping irrigation off the tree leaves and pruning for air movement and light will help keep your tree healthy even though we can't control the weather.

Grasshoppers are out and eating away at various plants. The best time to kill grasshoppers is when they are small. Using Nolo Bait or Semispore will help reduce the population but I hear those products may be in short supply this year. Sevin is labeled for grasshoppers but use cautiously as it is non-selective and is hard on ladybugs and bees. Sevin powder mixed with bran flakes spread in hot sunny areas where you see grasshoppers can help. The bran makes the Sevin powder more attractive for the grasshoppers to eat.

We have had some questions about pets and plants. I always refer folks to their veterinarian for a specific list of problem plants for your specific pet. I have heard that horses and the prunus family are not a good mix but I frequently see horse pasture with chokecherry bushes that the horses are eating due to lack of grass for them to eat. You will not want to get me started on the topic of too many horses for the amount of available grass. The ASPCA website also lists plants that can be harmful for



pets and is a good reference: <https://www.asPCA.org/pet-care/animal-poison-control/toxic-and-non-toxic-plants>.

We have also seen several specimens come in with leaf scorch. Leaf scorch is basically sunburn on the plants. Leaf scorch can be an indicator of inadequate roots, excess moisture, not enough moisture, too much fertilizer or transplant shock. Prevention of scorch needs to begin with winter watering. Here is a good discussion from Colorado State University Extension: <http://extension.colostate.edu/docs/pubs/garden/02911.pdf>

So even with all the potential summer bugs we still love our landscape and we love the challenge of making things grow. Sometimes we just have to step back and see what amazing things plants will do. If we end up not liking that then change it for next year with a better plant for that spot. Sorry if it seems like I am always sending you off to look at something posted on the Internet. If you would like a copy of the info sheets I mention please stop by Canyon Creek Nursery.

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