Welcome to our new newsletter for current issues in the landscape and garden. This newsletter is aimed at the home horticulture/master gardener audience. We will try to get it out twice monthly during the growing season. Mary Kay Malinoski and Dave Clement are coordinating it and please send any contributions to us. Jon Traunfeld will be contributing fruit and vegetable tips. The newsletter will be posted on the HGIC web site under resources.

**Current Observations in the Landscape:**

**Insects and Other Pests by Mary Kay Malinoski, Extension Specialist, Home and Garden Information Center (unless otherwise noted).**

**Lace bugs are active on many landscape shrubs and trees**

Lace bugs are small plant-feeding bugs. Most species are about 3/16 inch long when mature. Those that attack shrubs include Andromeda, Azalea and Rhododendron lace bugs. Lace bugs are named for their lace-like wings. The immatures or nymphs, lack wings and are usually spiny. Most lace bugs live on the lower surface of leaves and deposit their black eggs there.

Lace bugs pierce the leaf with long, slender mouth parts and suck out the cellular contents. Feeding damage first appears as white stippling or tiny white spots. These spots later merge, giving the leaves a bleached, white appearance. The leaves then turn yellow or brown. Also look for black or brown fecal spots they deposit on the undersides of leaves. Severe infestations may cause premature leaf drop and branch dieback. Broadleafed evergreen shrubs grown in full sun, may be killed when heavily infested.

**Management:** Begin monitoring for lace bugs in early May. Damage usually begins on older leaves and later on new growth. If damage is heavy and lace bugs are actively feeding, treatment may be necessary. Horticultural oil and contact insecticides will give control only if the lower leaf surfaces are thoroughly sprayed. Systemic insecticides will give control if upper or lower leaf surfaces are treated. Check with
Aphids are on just about everything!

Most aphids are small, soft-bodied insects, of various colors, some may be covered with fluffy white wax. One of the largest aphids is the giant bark aphid, which is 6mm and covered with a waxy coating. All aphids have long, slender mouthparts, which they use to suck out plant fluids. This feeding causes curling, distortion, or wilting of the leaves. They excrete honeydew, which makes the leaves sticky and supports the growth of sooty mold.

Management: Aphids are generally more of a problem May through June and again in the fall. Control is often not necessary because of predator and parasite activity. Common predators are green lacewing larvae, lady beetles, hoover fly larvae and predatory bugs. Aphids are parasitized by several small wasps. Parasitized aphids turn brown and remain on the leaves. If necessary, aphids may be controlled with an application of insecticidal soap.

Ants tending aphids harvest honeydew and protect the aphids from predators and parasites.
A variety of soft scales are on many shrubs and trees.

Soft scales are sucking insects that attack a wide variety of shrubs. Heavy infestations may cause leaf yellowing, stunting and dieback. Soft scales appear as raised bumps on twigs and branches, vary in color and can be scraped off. They may be over 1/3 inch when mature and vary in color. They produce honeydew and sooty mold, which may be present on leaves below infested branches. Common examples include cottony maple leaf scale, magnolia, Indian wax, cottony camellia scale, and European fruit lecanium.

![Cottony camellia scale on holly laying eggmasses. Crawlers will be hatching any minute.](image)

![Indian wax scale on holly with sooty mold](image)

Management: To control soft scale infestations, prune out branches with severe symptoms. Parasites generally provide control of many scale infestations. To protect parasites, avoid spraying with insecticides during the summer. If treatment is necessary, spray the shrub with a dormant rate of horticultural oil during the dormant season to control overwintering scales.

Rose Slug is actively chewing up roses!

The rose slug is one of three common sawflies that attack roses (others are curled and bristly rose slugs). Adults of all three species resemble wasps and are about 1/4" long. Mature larvae are about 1/2" long and yellow-green with yellow heads. The larvae skeletonize the leaves and in heavy infestations can cause leaves to turn brown and curl. Check roses in May and June (in Maryland) for the slug-like, greenish-yellow larvae on the upper surface of skeletonized leaves. If the infestation is light, pick off and destroy the larvae. To control heavy infestations, use a registered systemic insecticide.

Bristly rose slug larvae are about 5/8" long and greenish white with long, stout bristles. They skeletonize leaves by feeding from the undersides of the leaves and later chew holes through the leaves. Curled rose slug larvae are metallic green above, marked with white dots, grayish white underneath, with yellow-brown heads. They curl up like a cutworm and are about 3/4" when mature. Curled rose slugs initially feed by skeletonizing the leaves, but eventually defoliate entire leaflets except for the largest veins.
How Do I Kill It? – Steve Allgeier, Extension Educator, Carroll County

How often do you get this question at a “Ask A Master Garden” table – “How Do I Kill It”?

A rather large beetle grub (about 3.75 inches long) was brought in to the Carroll Extension Office. It is an Eastern Hercules Beetle grub. This is a harmless grub was found in the rotting stump of a Cherry tree and typically only consumes dead or rotting wood fibers. After explaining that the grub was not a problem and that there were no worries, the next question was – “How Do I Kill It”? Makes you wonder if people pay attention.

Photo: Carroll County Master Gardeners

Below are some interesting facts courtesy the non-profit group Edible San Marcos:

Hercules Beetles are the largest of beetles in the United States. They are found from Florida to New York on the East Coast. In the West they are found from Illinois to Arkansas and Texas. The Ox Beetle are also called Rhinoceros Beetle.

They are a scarab beetle. The adult beetles are 1 1/2 to 2 1/2 inches long. The larvae are 2 to 3 1/2 inches long. Females make a pile of sticks that are decaying and paste them together with saliva and lays it’s eggs in the summer. The adults remain underground during the winter. The beetles live in shady areas. Hercules beetles are attracted to light, and are more active at night. Larvae take almost a year to develop into pupae. It only takes a few weeks from adults to emerge from pupae.

The males have horns on their heads and they are larger than the females. The size of the horn depends on the amount of nutrition that they receive. The more nutrition that they receive the longer their horn is.

Hercules beetle larvae are very beneficial for the compost. They help break down organic matter in the compost. The beetles can break down compost in no time at all. They prefer leaves, and rotting wood, and they like it like it moist. Hercules Beetles are said to prefer rotting wood from wild cherry, black

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locust, oak, pine and willow. I find them in my compost piles that have large amounts of leaves more than anything else. As adults they eat sap from ash trees. I have ash trees and I have not seen damage on my trees or the leaves and I have a lot of them.

If you find these guys in the compost keep them. However you may have some competition as there are some critters that like them as well. The predators of the hercules beetle larvae are owls, crows, blue jays, woodpeckers, fox, skunks, raccoon, opossum, snakes, centipedes, ground beetles, spiders, mydas fly maggots and predatory mites. During a terrible drought the raccoons had found my gold mine of hercules beetles and it was quite comical. I had about 5 yards of compost and the raccoons had decided to have their meal. Well they had been reaching in and pulling out the larvae. Then it looked like they were sliding down the compost piles. Crazy little guys, they are funny! The beetles can emit a bad smell to fend off their attackers. Many people have rhinoceros beetles as pets. You can keep your pet outside in your compost as a grub or bring your grub in and when he grows up you can have a huge beetle that will live a year or two as an adult. Pictured above is a female Hercules beetle Photo: FCPS.EDU

Diseases and Weeds by David Clement, Extension Specialist, Home and Garden Information Center (unless otherwise noted).

Brown Rot on Flowering Cherries

Spring weather often brings with it the chances of diseases in our landscapes and unfortunately the past few springs have brought a serious disease to our flowering cherries, especially the cultivar ‘Kwansan’. This new disease is really an old orchard disease of stone fruit called brown rot. In Maryland landscapes this new problem is caused by the fungus *Monilinia laxa*.

The first symptoms often seen are browning and collapse of the blossoms followed closely by death of the small twigs. The symptoms look like fire blight, but cherries are not susceptible to that disease. If infected blossoms do not drop off, the fungus may grow through the flower stem (pedicel) and into the twig below. Twigs develop elliptical cankers with profuse gumming at the margin between diseased and healthy tissue. Leaves on these infected shoots turn brown and wither, but remain attached. In some instances, twigs are girdled and killed. During wet weather in May and June, the fungus sporulates on the surface of infected twig cankers. Cankers enlarge from season to season, and sporulation may continue on large cankers for 4 years or more.

Visible presence of the pathogen is easy under wet conditions and appears as powdery tufts of brown gray spores that are visible on the outside of infected flowers, and on infected fruit or twig surfaces.
Management of this disease in orchards relies on good sanitation and proper timing of protectant fungicides. However in ornamentals this disease is a new problem and has not been studied extensively.

Fireblight on ornamental trees

Fireblight is serious bacterial disease of plants in the rose family. The most commonly damaged plants in the landscape are apple, cotoneaster, firethorn, hawthorn, mountain ash, quince, and pear. However the list of susceptible plants includes over 130 plant species. Additional plants that can be infected include chokeberry, Kerria, photinia, serviceberry and spirea. The first symptoms usually start on the blossoms as they quickly droop, shrivel or turn brown. The disease progresses from the blossoms into the twigs and branches. The very tips of the branches often droop or characteristically curl over to give a hooked appearance. The affected leaves turn a dark brown to black and remain attached to the branch. This gives the appearance of scorching as if by fire.

With few exceptions, the disease moves more slowly in woody tissue, and often moves down to the base of a branch where it forms a lesion or canker. The color of the infected wood beneath the bark is often a reddish brown. The most damaging cankers are those formed on the main stem or base of the plant since they often girdle and kill the plant. During wet weather droplets of bacterial ooze form on the surface of cankers and can be spread by wind, rain, birds, humans or insects to other plants. The most common insects that spread the disease are pollinators such as bees and flies. The disease causing bacteria overwinter at the margins of cankers and become active again in the spring.
Fireblight symptoms on crabapple

During wet weather droplets of bacterial ooze form on the surface of cankers and can be spread by wind, rain, birds, humans or insects to other plants.

**Management:** Disease management often involves selecting resistant plant varieties. Avoid cultural practices, such as over fertilizing, that induces excessive succulent growth, which is more susceptible to infection. Control insect populations with appropriate insecticides. Fungicides that contain copper can be applied at bloom to slow down infections. Infected branches should be pruned 8-12 inches below any visible symptoms. Don’t prune infected shoots back to a healthy branch. Leave a 4-5 inch stub that can be pruned off over the winter when the disease is dormant.

**Anthracnose Leaf Diseases**

These diseases are characterized by discrete lesions that are usually found along leaf veins. In severe cases these lesions may run together and kill the entire leaf. Young leaves may become distorted as healthy tissue continues to grow around dead areas. Under optimum disease conditions the entire tree may be defoliated in the spring or early summer. Infection may proceed from the leaf blade down the petiole (leaf stem) into the small twigs at the tips of the tree branches. The pathogen may over winter in the twigs until the infection cycle starts over the next spring. Common examples are oak anthracnose, maple anthracnose (see photo above), and sycamore anthracnose.
Ash anthracnose

Sycamore anthracnose in the blight phase

**Management strategies:** In most cases as mentioned above anthracnose leaf diseases on mature trees will not be a major problem threatening the health of the tree. The best management practices involve pruning and removal of dead twigs during the winter or dry summer months. Mature trees can be thinned for better air circulation throughout the canopy. Rake and remove infected fallen leaves in the fall and plant resistant varieties when available.

It is generally not economical to spray large mature shade trees for anthracnose diseases nor is it effective once disease symptoms are noticeable. Young trees or newly planted trees may need fungicide sprays to prevent excessive leaf loss until they become established in the landscape.

**Annual Bluegrass is a common weed in thin turf**

*(Poa annua)* General description: Usually first noticed when it produces numerous greenish white pyramidal shaped seed heads in the spring. Winter annual that grows upright and forms clumps by tillering. Leaves are folded in the bud, lack auricles and have a slightly pointed ligule. Leaf sheaths are hairless and the collar is smooth. Light green in color and tolerates close mowing. Produces a shallow fibrous root system.

Seeds of annual bluegrass germinate in the fall. Prevent this weed with a late August or September application of a preemergent herbicide. Check with your local garden center for currently available herbicides.

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Hollies and Southern Magnolias are dropping their old leaves.

![American holly with old leaves turning yellow and dropping](image1)

![Southern Magnolia with old yellow leaves](image2)

**Bad pruning of azaleas!**

Improper pruning of spring flowering shrubs may result in removal of flower buds. Pruning at the wrong time can result in uneven flowering if some, but not all, flower buds are removed. Most spring flowering shrubs set flower buds in late summer and should be pruned by the end of June. Lilacs should be pruned immediately after flowering. Timely pruning will allow new growth to mature enough to form flower buds in late summer. Other improper pruning, such as excessive pruning can result in failure to flower. Pruning is considered excessive when more than one third of a plant is removed at a time. This type of pruning stimulates vegetative growth and results in little or no flower bud formation.

Vegetable and Fruit Gardening by Jon Traufeld, Extension Specialist, Home and Garden Information Center.

Fireblight is widespread

This photo is of a fireblight strike of a branch of an Asian pear tree (‘Olympic’) planted in March. Only one branch shows symptoms and a sister tree 20 ft. away is symptomless. The gardener pruned to within 6-in. of the trunk and will then remove that “ugly stub” in winter. A copper spray at the “silver tip” stage
of bud development may have prevented the problem. I have seen quite a bit of fireblight on Callery pear street trees in Howard Co. neighborhoods over the past 5 days.

Photo: Jon Traunfeld, UME

Cold damage to warm-season transplants

We have received many reports and observed many examples of cold injury to tomato, pepper, eggplant, bean, basil, squash, and other crops. The old adage “wait until after Mother’s Day to plant” was not helpful to gardeners who planted on May 13! Cold injury shows up as white or brown spots or blotches and may “look” like a fungal pathogen on first glance. Wind whipping, brief hard rain and hail and widely fluctuating day to evening temperatures can also contribute to leaf and stem injury.

Please send all submissions, including photos to Mary Kay Malinoski, mkmal@umd.edu or to David L. Clement, clement@umd.edu, by Tuesday of each week so that we can get the newsletter out by Thursday. Thanks and please contribute!