

# Town Gardener

## Questions and answers on trees

By TOM CAVAN

**Question:** My maple tree has little orange bumps on the bottom side of the leaves. The leaves are curling up and turning purple. What is it and what can I do?

**Answer:** The problem you have is called Maple Gall Mite. This particular problem is very common throughout Southern Ontario. What you see is a virus structure called a gall. The female mite lays eggs on new leaves in spring and at that time transfers a virus. As the eggs grow so does the gall. The galls are not always orange, nor are they always round, but they are always appearing on the underside of the leaves of maples. As the eggs mature the gall will become very large and unsightly. The virus can contort the leaves and prevent the trees from growing. The mites suck juices from the tree and also deter the tree from growing. The solution is to apply a systematic insecticide that goes inside the tree veins and kills the insect. This has to be applied when the leaves are newly formed in spring and again during mid-summer. It is important to rake up all of the leaves so as to culminate the over-winter stages of both the insect and the virus. The only way to rid the tree of this problem is eliminate the insect because there is no cure for this virus. Year after year you will lessen the number of insects and eventually eradicate the problem. Unfortunately you must continuously spray every spring on the new tender foliage with a systematic insecticide as a preventative measure against the problem because it runs rampant throughout Ontario forests.

Application of foliar insecticides that are not systematic are useless against this pest. After controlling the pest and the tree remains vigorous only then do you return to a regular feeding program. Do not try to fertilize this tree during infection. Just water through hot dry conditions

and be patient.

**Question:** The bark on my cherry tree is splitting. What is happening and what can I do to stop it?

**Answer:** If the tree is more than 3" in caliper then the tree is simply maturing. The cambium layer beneath the bark is expanding with the increase in growth and since the bark is hardened cells is simply cracks under expansion. The bark cracks will callous and harden providing they remain dry. Don't cover this wound with pruning paste, it will help trap moisture in and promote decay. In fact if you have pruning paste in your possession I would recommend you discard it or use it for repairing your roof or some other purpose. If your tree has horizontal cracks or splitting it would be caused by physical injury and the tree has become bruised, i.e. being bashed by a lawnmower. If you have a physical injury to a tree's bark take a sharp clean knife and remove any loose bark so it cannot trap water in the wound. Then make a sharp shaped cut around the wound and scrape clean so it can callous and dry. Again don't use pruning paste as it is detrimental make-up. Allow the wound to dry and callous.

**Question:** Every year I apply Cygon 2E to my birch tree and I still get leaf-miners. I follow the directions but I cannot get rid of them.

**Answer:** Birch leaf-miners are not easily eradicated from the birch trees but is controllable. Leaf-miner attacks your birch by laying eggs inside the layers of the leaf, then the eggs hatch and the first stage begins to feed inside the leaf. This is why you use a systematic insecticide. The insecticide travels inside the veins of the tree and when the leaf-miner feeds it will digest the insecticide and die. Repeated application every year will eventually eradicate the insect, but you must not stop this preven-

tative medicine or they will return. If you apply Cygon 2E (Dymethoate) the insect must still attack the tree to ingest the insecticide. This particular insecticide is easily applied with a paint brush by painting a 6" band around the trunk below the first branch. Apply just as the tree breaks bud in spring and a second application 2 weeks later. This will arrest the leaf-miner and your birch will continue to flourish. If you have a bad infestation apply again in July to control their second attack in mid-July.

**Question:** I planted a fruit tree in spring. I mixed in peat and manure, then added some garden fertilizer. Now the tree has some blackened leaves on the top. What is wrong?

**Answer:** There are only a few conditions that will cause black leaves and they are 1. Over fertilization with high nitrogen. 2. Green manure, manure that has not sat for more than 1 year. 3. Animal urine. 4. Extreme cold to tender tissue. Therefore you must ask yourself if any of these are potential answers. I suspect that the roots came into contact with too much nitrogen due to the manure and fertilizer mix. You should not use any fertilizer on a newly transplanted tree with the exception of a transplanting fertilizer which will not burn young roots. Too much manure can burn the roots even if it is well composted. I would recommend you prune out any damaged parts and water the plant thoroughly. Don't use any fertilizer until all signs of this has passed. When you return to a fertilizer program use recommended fertilizer for fruit-bearing plants. It would be wise to use them at half strength so you don't force too much foliage and not enough potential fruit.

For more information call the Town Gardener Hotline at 519-833-2117.



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### NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING CEDARVALE PARK

There will be a public meeting at 6:00 p.m. on May 6, 1991 in the Civic Centre Council Chambers to review and provide comment on a Proposal by the Izaak Walton Fly Fisherman's Club to "Rehabilitate" the section of Sliver Creek which flows through the currently maintained area of Cedarvale Park, in Georgetown. The Proposal calls for the construction of numerous structures within the stream, and the elimination of grass cutting along portions of the stream bank in attempts to create enhanced fish habitat. All interested parties are invited to attend this public meeting regarding this proposal prior to its consideration by the General Committee at its meeting later that same evening.

For further information please contact:  
**Mr. Bryan Shynal**  
 Superintendent of Parks  
 The Corporation of the  
 Town of Halton Hills

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