

September 24, 2010 -- Vol. 25, No. 18



## Landscape Alert

### In this issue

#### Landscape and nursery

- Is fall really a great time to plant trees?

#### Turfgrass

- Final fall turf chores

#### Christmas trees and forestry

- Looper damaging Fraser Fir

#### Other news

- Watch your landscape for this invasive shrub

### Last issue for 2010

This is the final issue for the 2010 season of the *Landscape CAT Alert* newsletter. Included in this issue is an index of articles to help guide readers through the topics covered this year. *MSUE* educators and specialists have worked hard to inform readers about current issues and crop production throughout the last few months.

We will continue to publish timely articles at the *Landscape CAT Alert* web site: <http://ipmnews.msu.edu/landscape/>. Interested in staying informed via email notification? Send an email to [catalert@msu.edu](mailto:catalert@msu.edu) with your full name and note that you wish to subscribe to the fruit edition.

We love to hear feedback from our readers. Do you have a comment or suggestion? Please send it to [catalert@msu.edu](mailto:catalert@msu.edu) or mail it to the address on the back of this newsletter. Indicate whether you are referring to our fruit, vegetable, field crop or landscape edition.

This is our last issue with assistant editor Andrea Gooch. We wish her well at her new job in Kalamazoo and will miss her excellent skills here at the MSU IPM Program.

*Thank you. - Joy Landis, editor and Andrea Gooch, asst. editor*

### Is fall really a great time to plant trees?

Bert Cregg, Horticulture and Forestry

In numerous extension bulletins and certainly in nursery sales advertising, we hear that “fall is the perfect time to plant trees.” Nevertheless when I look back on the planting disasters I’ve been called in to inspect over the years a disproportional share (I’d say by a factor of two or three to one) are fall planting jobs.

What gives? Well, the notion that fall is a great time for planting is built in a faulty premise, at least for this part of the country. Probably the most commonly cited reason for fall planting is that trees grow a lot of roots in the fall. This assumes that since there’s no shoot growth occurring, trees automatically shift reserves below ground. There

is certainly a “pecking order” of carbohydrate distribution within a tree based on relatively strengths of sources and sinks. But there’s one factor that trumps all others: temperature. Soil temperature is the biggest driver of root growth. As temperatures decline in the fall, new root growth essentially ceases. For trees that are well established, this is no problem. For trees that have just been transplanted and need to re-establish root-soil contact this is a tough row to hoe. Throw in a tough Michigan winter and the tree’s facing an uphill climb.

In most cases, planting failures have multiple causal factors. Even if trees are planted in the spring, they may have still experience problems. My point is that

a more accurate statement is “fall is an OK time to plant trees;” not the best time or even a great time. In certain parts of the country, fall probably *is* the best time to plant trees. Washington State University Extension Specialist (and fellow Garden Professor blogger), Linda Chalker-Scott is adamant that fall

is better than spring planting in the West where plentiful fall rainfall is as predictable as dry, hot summers. For the Midwest, however, where cold soil temperatures can limit new root growth in the fall, I will stick to my guns and recommend spring planting if there is no compelling reason to plant in the fall.

For spirited debate on the merits of fall planting in various parts of the country, check out the Garden Professors blog archive <https://sharepoint.cahnrs.wsu.edu/blogs/urbanhort/archive/2010/05/24/is-fall-really-a-great-time-to-plant-trees.aspx> **IPM**

## Final fall turf chores

Kevin Frank, Crop and Soil Sciences

Following one of the most challenging years of growing turf in Michigan there are several management practices that can help the turf recover and ensure a successful start to 2011.

### Fall fertilization

Many turf sites are in need of a fertilizer application. A multitude of stresses this summer have resulted in thinning turf that if not filled in with turf will fill in with weeds. Fertilizing in the fall will result in a moderate top-growth response and give the plant some extra energy to develop roots and fill in the voids. If you're going to fertilize in the fall, I would go ahead and get the application down so the plant can benefit while the growing conditions are still favorable.

### Fall broadleaf weed control

Fall is the ideal time to control broadleaf weeds because the weeds are storing carbohydrates in their root system and are more susceptible to herbicide applications. So if your turf has been overtaken by a bevy of broadleaf weeds, applying an herbicide in late September or early October will make a difference in what you battle next year. Apply the herbicides on a sunny day when rain is not in the forecast for 24 hours. We want the herbicides to dry on the leaf surfaces and not be immediately washed off. The recent rains that have covered most of the state should ensure weeds are actively growing and any herbicide

applications should be very effective. There are many different herbicides that could be used, including the most common three-way broadleaf weed control mixtures. As with any pesticide application, always make sure to wear the appropriate safety attire and follow all label recommendations. The greatest shortcoming of killing broadleaf weeds at this time of year is that you really don't get to watch them die. In many cases, you may not see the obliteration of these weeds this fall, but next year they won't be there or you will have at least reduced their numbers.

### Fall seeding

Now that it's finally officially fall, many people may still think of reseeding some damaged areas in their turf. If you still want to do some seeding, you definitely want to get going if you're going to reseed an area. We are probably past the ideal seeding window, but if we have a mild fall, seeding at this time can still be successful. Along the Grand Rapids-Lansing-Detroit corridor you are probably safe to seed until around October 1 and have enough time for the seed to germinate and survive the winter. If you're north of that line and still want to seed, hope for a warm fall. Consider that seed is relatively inexpensive and if you're not doing a huge area I wouldn't worry too much, if it doesn't survive the winter you've got some practice in this fall and will be ready to go next spring.

### Mulching leaves

Due to summer stress, many trees have already started shedding leaves. Tree leaves are nature's way of giving you some free fertilizer and organic matter for your turf. If you haven't tried to mulch leaves back into the turf, maybe this is the year you start. Here's what you need to know to successfully mow leaves into the turf.

First of all make sure your mower has a sharp blade, after a long season of mowing the blades may be dull at this time of year and trying to chop up leaves will be more challenging with a dull blade.

Second, raise the mower as high as it will go and mow at your normal speed – don't “rev” the throttle to the high jackrabbit setting and blaze around the yard. Try to mow the leaves when they are moist from the morning dew, but don't mow them when they're really wet. This will prevent the leaves from blowing all over the place and will help with your allergies.

Finally, don't let the leaves pile up too high before you mow. Too high would probably be greater than 3-4 inches of leaf depth on the turf. Mulching leaves helps the turf by returning nutrients and organic matter, which can be especially beneficial on poor soils.

### Final mowing

Many people ask about lowering the mowing height for the final mowing of the year. When you get

past the leaf mulching period in the fall and the turf has essentially stopped its top-growth, it is OK to lower the mowing height to clean-up the turf and prevent the turf from

being too tall going into winter. I would recommend that you lower the mowing height no more than one notch on your mower (typically half-inch). This will help you clean-

up any leftover leaf mulch or debris and give the turf a little trim before winter sets in. **IPM**

### Looper damaging Fraser fir

Jill O'Donnell, Christmas Tree Senior ICM educator

We have found a looper (inch worm) causing a lot of feeding damage in Fraser fir. This caterpillar is anywhere from 0.25 to 1.0 inch long, light green with dark green and white stripes. The head capsule is light brown. The larva chew notches out of the needles, which after a few days, turn brown in color. You will also find needles hanging from silken threads. Most of the damage has been to the top part of the tree, but feeding can be found throughout the tree.

We don't usually have insect problems at this time of the year, so it may go unnoticed until the trees have a significant amount of damage. I would suggest growers take a walk through your Fraser fir fields now. Bring along a scouting board or white sheet of paper and tap the trees (like sampling for spider mites) to find these larvae. **IPM**



Looper.



Fraser fir damage caused by looper.



Browning of Fraser fir.



Brown needles.

### Watch your landscape for this invasive shrub

Common buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*) is an invasive shrub or tree originating in Eurasia that was introduced to the United States as an ornamental plant. It has many negative impacts on the environment including reducing light availability for native plants in forest understories and facilitating several other exotic species. Buckthorn is the link in a chain of invaders that has a negative impact on the ecosystem. Not only does the shrub choke out native plants, but it is also the overwintering host for the soybean aphid, an invasive pest that damages soybeans.



Common Buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*).

Common buckthorn is often found in hedgerows and along forest edges. Here's how to identify it for removal from your landscape.



Common buckthorn may appear as a shrub.

A Alumnai

A Michel

**Appearance:** Shrub or small tree reaching up to 25 ft. in height. Crown irregularly shaped. Multiple stems at base.

**Leaves:** Oval or rounded with pointed tip. Margins finely-toothed. 3-5 pair upward-curved veins. Glossy and smooth. Hairless on top and bottom.

**Branches:** Buds and leaves are opposite. End in short, sharp spines.

**Bark:** Rough; grey to brown with light-colored lenticels.

**Wood:** Inner bark yellow and heartwood orange or pink.

**Flowers:** Dense clusters of 4-petaled, yellow-green flowers in spring.

**Fruit:** Large, black berries. Ripen in fall.

If you'd like to help encourage people to destroy buckthorn plants in your area, bookmarks with the identification information in this article are available from MSU Extension's bulletin office. Call 517-353-6740 (Hours: M-F 8:00am - 5:00pm.). The bookmarks are packaged in groups of 100.

This information is being provided through USDA AFRI. Project team: Mary Gardiner, Ohio State University; Matt O'Neal, Iowa State University; and Doug Landis, Michigan State University. **IPM**

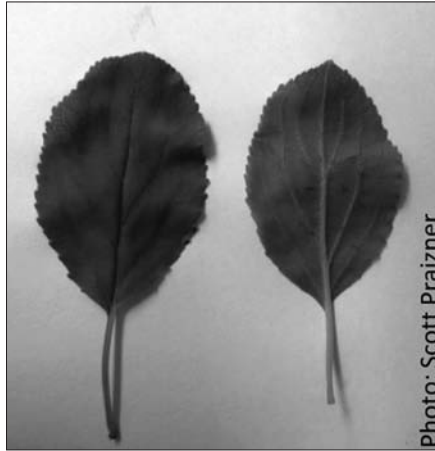


Photo: Scott Prajzner

Leaves.



S. Prajzner

Bark.



S. Prajzner

Wood.



S. Prajzner

Branches and thorn.



S. Prajzner

Flowers.



S. Prose

Fruit.

Michigan State University Cooperative Agricultural Weather Service  
Cumulative Precipitation Summary For 09/22/2010\*

STATION OR DISTRICT	ACTUAL AND PREDICTED DEGREE-DAY ACCUMULATIONS SINCE MARCH 1 2010 (*)				PRECIPITATION TOTALS SINCE											
	BASE 42 BE DEGREE-DAYS		BASE 50 BE DEGREE-DAYS		09/16/2010 (Last week)		09/09/2010 (Last 2 weeks)		08/26/2010 (Last 4 weeks)		04/01/10 (since Apr. 1)		Actual	Dev. Norm.		
	AS OF 2009	BY 2010	AS OF 2009	BY 2010	Actual	Dev. Norm.	Actual	Dev. Norm.	Actual	Dev. Norm.	Actual	Dev. Norm.			Actual	Dev. Norm.
WEST UP NORMS**	2545	2886	2938	2990	1808	1857	1808	1833	1857	1808	1833	1857	1808	1833		
STEPHENSON	2920	3581	3622	3681	1805	2355	1805	2355	2370	2398	2370	2398	2370	2398		
EAST UP NORMS	2496	3131	3176	3226	1457	1946	1457	1946	1983	1983	1983	1983	1983	1983		
CHATHAM	2636	3417	3466	3521	1530	2122	1530	2122	2143	2163	2143	2163	2143	2163		
SSMARIE	2902	3589	3654	3722	1760	2334	1760	2334	2371	2402	2371	2402	2371	2402		
N. W. LP NORMS	2667	3443	3506	3570	1608	2225	1608	2225	2260	2290	2260	2290	2260	2290		
LAKECITY	3200	3264	3326	3372	2061	2095	2061	2095	2128	2128	2128	2128	2128	2128		
PELLSTON	2902	3589	3654	3722	1760	2334	1760	2334	2371	2402	2371	2402	2371	2402		
N. E. LP NORMS	3128	3189	3248	3248	1991	2022	1991	2022	2053	2053	2053	2053	2053	2053		
ALPENA	2916	3611	3671	3737	1784	2353	1784	2353	2384	2416	2384	2416	2384	2416		
HFNLAKE	2940	3758	3820	3889	1786	2480	1786	2480	2513	2546	2513	2546	2513	2546		
OSSINEKE	2881	3625	3685	3751	1747	2359	1747	2359	2390	2422	2390	2422	2390	2422		
ROGERCITY	2912	3461	3518	3582	1761	2222	1761	2222	2251	2282	2251	2282	2251	2282		
W. CENT. LP NORMS	3483	3554	3623	3623	2288	2328	2288	2328	2366	2366	2366	2366	2366	2366		
FREMONT	3373	4080	4163	4242	2121	2732	2121	2732	2784	2823	2784	2823	2784	2823		
CENT. LP NORMS	3569	3640	3708	3708	2362	2402	2362	2402	2441	2441	2441	2441	2441	2441		
ALMA	3436	4133	4220	4300	2177	2805	2177	2805	2861	2902	2861	2902	2861	2902		
WHEELER	3313	3993	4077	4154	2092	2693	2092	2693	2747	2786	2747	2786	2747	2786		
E. CENT. LP NORMS	3609	3687	3759	3759	2397	2441	2397	2441	2482	2482	2482	2482	2482	2482		
AKRON	3280	4050	4140	4225	2056	2738	2056	2738	2796	2839	2796	2839	2796	2839		
BADAXE	3227	4001	4090	4174	2027	2703	2027	2703	2760	2803	2760	2803	2760	2803		
PIGEON	3193	3967	4056	4138	1989	2663	1989	2663	2720	2761	2720	2761	2720	2761		
SAGINAW	3551	4330	4427	4517	2275	2985	2275	2985	3048	3095	3048	3095	3048	3095		
SAGVALLEY	3265	4005	4094	4178	2033	2694	2033	2694	2751	2793	2751	2793	2751	2793		
STANDISH	3096	3835	3921	4000	1915	2555	1915	2555	2609	2649	2609	2649	2609	2649		
S. W. LP NORMS***	3936	4025	4109	4109	2667	2719	2667	2719	2769	2769	2769	2769	2769	2769		
ALLENDALE	3396	4086	4174	4265	2129	2732	2129	2732	2789	2836	2789	2836	2789	2836		
GRAPIDS	3848	4580	4679	4781	2527	3181	2527	3181	3247	3302	3247	3302	3247	3302		
GULLLAKE	4062	4676	4777	4881	2706	3266	2706	3266	3334	3390	3334	3390	3334	3390		
SOUTHBEND	4044	4693	4794	4899	2697	3271	2697	3271	3339	3396	3339	3396	3339	3396		
S. CENT. LP NORMS	3848	3932	4010	4010	2601	2650	2601	2650	2696	2696	2696	2696	2696	2696		
ALBION	3701	4380	4479	4571	2402	3009	2402	3009	3076	3125	3076	3125	3076	3125		
CERESCO	3609	4304	4401	4492	2316	2934	2316	2934	2999	3047	2999	3047	2999	3047		
COLDWATER	3836	4454	4555	4648	2524	3069	2524	3069	3137	3187	3137	3187	3137	3187		
IONIA	3415	4105	4198	4284	2158	2768	2158	2768	2829	2875	2829	2875	2829	2875		
LANSING	3680	4446	4546	4640	2369	3067	2369	3067	3135	3185	3135	3185	3135	3185		
OMOSSO	3463	4244	4340	4429	2205	2902	2205	2902	2966	3014	2966	3014	2966	3014		
S. E. LP NORMS	3872	3960	4038	4038	2614	2666	2614	2666	2712	2712	2712	2712	2712	2712		
FLINT	3566	4392	4493	4587	2283	3035	2283	3035	3105	3152	3105	3152	3105	3152		
HELL	3644	4275	4374	4465	2353	2918	2353	2918	2985	3030	2985	3030	2985	3030		
LAPEER	3445	4110	4205	4292	2197	2793	2197	2793	2857	2900	2857	2900	2857	2900		
PETERSBURG	3671	4349	4449	4542	2390	2991	2390	2991	3060	3106	3060	3106	3060	3106		
ROME0	3577	4282	4381	4472	2299	2929	2299	2929	2996	3041	2996	3041	2996	3041		
TIPTON	3697	4323	4423	4515	2391	2965	2391	2965	3033	3079	3033	3079	3033	3079		
TOLEDO	4108	4754	4864	4965	2744	3345	2744	3345	3422	3473	3422	3473	3422	3473		

\* Since weather data for some agricultural stations are not available prior to April 1st, GDD values for those stations during February and March are estimated with closest available station data.  
\*\* District normals were calculated as the mean of daily GDD totals at several stations within each district for the period 1951-1980.  
Report generated at 09:49, 09/23/10

Report generated at 09:49, 09/23/10



## Crop Advisory Team Alerts

Integrated Pest Management Program  
Michigan State University  
B 18 Food Safety & Toxicology Building  
East Lansing, Michigan 48824 -1302

## The *Landscape Alert* is brought to you by: MSU Extension Campus Specialists

### Entomology

Dr. Deborah McCullough  
Dr. David Smitley

### Plant Pathology

Dr. Dennis Fulbright  
Dr. Willie Kirk

### Forestry

Dr. Bert Cregg  
Dr. Deborah McCullough

### Crop & Soil Sciences

Dr. Kevin Frank

### Horticulture

Dr. Bert Cregg  
Dr. Tom Fernandez

### MSU Diagnostic Services

Dr. Jan Byrne  
Howard Russell

### Geography/ Agric. Meteorology

Dr. Jeff Andresen

## MSU Extension and MDA Field Staff

Mike Bryan, Michigan Dept. of Agriculture  
Tom Dudek, West Central Landscape/Nursery Senior District Extension Educator  
Dr. Duke Elsner, Grand Traverse County Extension Horticultural Educator  
Rebecca Finneran, Kent County Extension Horticultural Educator  
Jill O'Donnell, Statewide Christmas Tree Senior ICM Educator  
Jennie Stanger, Monroe County Extension Horticultural Educator  
Mary Wilson, Southeast District Extension Horticulture Educator  
Bob Bricault, Washtenaw County Extension ANR Educator,  
Terry McLean, Genesee County Extension Horticultural Educator  
Linda Whitlock, Kalamazoo County Consumer Horticulture Educator

MSU is an affirmative-action, equal-opportunity employer. Michigan State University Extension programs and materials are open to all without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, religion, age, height, weight, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status, family status or veteran status.



## The *Landscape Alert* is published by the Michigan State University IPM Program

Joy Neumann Landis, editor  
Andrea Gooch, assistant editor

*Crop Advisory Team Alert*  
subscriptions are \$38 or free on the  
Internet at:

[www.ipmnews.msu.edu/landscape](http://www.ipmnews.msu.edu/landscape)

To subscribe or for information:

*Crop Advisory Team Alerts*  
243 Natural Science Bldg.  
Michigan State University  
East Lansing, MI 48824  
(517) 353-4703  
E-mail: [catalert@msu.edu](mailto:catalert@msu.edu)

Additional support provided by the  
Michigan Department of  
Agriculture and the MSU  
Landscape & Nursery Team.