

Garden Column for the Salisbury Post
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The unusual weather this spring has many asking a multitude of questions about lawns, gardens and insect pests. Cooperative Extension has received many inquiries over the past few weeks that may be of interest.

Question: My Bradford pear leaves are dead on the tips. Was it the cold weather? Answer: Possibly, but most likely it is fire blight. Fire blight is a bacterial disease that burns the tips of both fruiting and ornamental pears. It generally does not kill the tree.

Question: I already have earwigs in my garden and around my home. How do I get rid of them? Earwigs are those ugly insects with pincher-like ovipositor (tails). These insects can be controlled with most home insecticides.

Question: I found what I think is a water moccasin in my yard (the snake was brought to the office). Do we have those types of snakes here? Answer: Generally, no. It's too cold for our region, however, they may slip into the eastern end of Rowan County. (The snake was identified as a black rat snake.)

Question: What are the caterpillars in my cherry tree? How do I control them? Answer: Those are tent caterpillars. The annual infestation will vary, but it looks like a heavy number this spring. Control by disturbing the nest, opening to birds and other prey. Bacillus thuringensis sprays (Dipel, BT's) will control them.

Question: I have a big problem with clover. I have tried 2, 4-D products with limited success. Is there any herbicide that will control clover? Answer: Clover is a difficult weed to control. Post-emergence weed control herbicides work poorly. Turflon is a herbicide that gives some control poor soils tend to favor this weed. Keep lawns adequately fertilized.

Question: My azaleas look bad. The leaves are dusty and pale with black specks underneath. What is the problem? Answer:

It's not the freeze that's your problem, but lacebugs. These are typical insects of azalea and rhododendron. Spray with insecticides. The key for control is to spray with high pressure on the undersides of leaves.

Question: Can I move my houseplants outdoors now? Answer: The chance of a frost is slight, so it may be a good time to move indoor plants outdoors for rejuvenation. Don't put houseplants in full sun; they will sunburn as fair skinned humans. Move them into a shady or partial shade. Give them plenty of water and fertilize them during the summer.

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