Texas Agricultural Extension Service

The Texas A&M University System

BRUSH COUNTRY HORTICULTURE

JUNE, 1996 **VOL. 7, NO. 6**

IN THIS ISSUE:

REVISED SPRAY GUIDE -----

B-5041, Homeowner's Fruit and Nut Spray Schedule by Jerral Johnson, George Philley, James Robinson and George McEachern has been revised effective May, 1996, with 10,000 copies newly printed and available from Agricultural Communications.

For pecans, the guide lists eight separate sprays that may be needed. However, the situation in deep south Texas does not warrant so many applications. We skip the dormant spray, but should certainly spray zinc at budbreak and prepollination and the pollination or casebearer spray.

Unless second generation casebearer is expected to be severe, we normally skip that one, as well as the subsequent cover sprays and water stage spray. However, it is imperative to spray at half-shell hardening for hickory shuckworm and stinkbug control. In summary, we can normally produce pecans with only four sprays—two of which are primarily nutritional.

One important factor for south Texas: forget the calendar dates indicated in the schedule. Instead, spray at the indicated growth stage. For example, budbreak is when buds begin to break, prepollination is when leaves are one-third grown and before pollen shed, casebearer is late April to early May, and half-shell hardening is when the shell is hard halfway down its length, which usually occurs in late July in the Valley to early August as you move north.

Julian W. Sauls
Professor & Extension Horticulturist

PSOCIDS ON TREES -----

When you get a call about webbing on trees, do not assume it is web worms. The first question to ask is where is the webbing located? If it is on the trunk or branches, you are probably dealing with psocids (common name is barklice). These small insects (less than 6 mm in length) feed on molds, fungi, fragments of dead insects, and similar materials. The species that makes the webbing on tree trunks is gregarious, and large colonies can be seen under the webbing. These insects do not hurt the tree in any way, but many people do not necessarily want the webbing on their trees. Psocid populations can be reduced with a strong spray of water. If insecticides are deemed necessary, most general use insecticides (dursban, diazinon, malathion) should provide good control, but application can be a little tricky. The webbing produced by the psocids provides some protection and a high volume spray with a little soap added to help penetrate the webbing may be needed.

Stormy Sparks
Associate Professor & Extension Entomologist

FLEA SEASON IS UPON US -----

Fleas can be a problem in south Texas through most of the year, but summer is undoubtedly the worst time. Fleas are tough to control once they have been allowed to become well-established and flea control is definitely an area where an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of control. A still relatively new product that works extremely well as a preventative is the fenoxycarb pills (Program) you can get at the vets (now available for dogs and cats). This treatment is given to the animal once a month (just like worm treatments) and affects any adult fleas feeding on the animal. You do not get any reproduction from fleas feeding on a treated animal. However, the treatment does not kill adult fleas, thus it works well in a preventative program (an occasional flea dip or shampoo for immigrating adults may be needed, particularly on 'free range' animals) but requires additional measures targeted at adults and larvae to control a well-established population.

Stormy Sparks
Associate Professor & Extension Entomologist

BE READY FOR ANT AND TERMITE SWARMS -----

If it ever rains again, be ready for lots of calls on swarming ants and termites. Many colonies have likely produced winged reproductives that are waiting for the right opportunity to swarm. A good spring/summer shower often triggers colonies to swarm. An easy method to determine which type of insect a caller is dealing with is to ask about the size of the front and hind wings. If both pair are of equal size, they are termites. If the hind wings are noticeably smaller, they are ants (this is ignoring the possibility of wasps and bees). Make sure the caller dealing with termites understands that a swarm outside the

house is not cause for concern. With the exception of the new termite bait stations, our termite treatments are designed to protect a structure with a chemical barrier—they do not kill termite colonies.

Stormy Sparks
Associate Professor & Extension Entomologist

PECAN NUT CASEBEARER -----

While we found very little adult activity and little feeding injury in two local orchards at Weslaco, pecan nut casebearer was present and damaging in other Valley locales. Yard trees in Mercedes showed significant damage, while a similar situation near Santa Rosa revealed significant damage to 'Mohawk' but no damage to several other varieties growing in close proximity to it.

Depending upon nut set and amount of damage from casebearer, homeowners should determine whether control of second generation casebearer is warranted. Timing in the Valley should be about June 15, but successively later as you move north.

If damage was light and set is good, control of second generation may not be warranted. Basically, a second generation casebearer larva usually destroys only one nutlet because the nutlets are so much larger than they were when the first generation hit.

Julian W. Sauls
Professor & Extension Horticulturist

LEAFMINER/WIND DAMAGE -----

While we really expected serious damage to the May flush, citrus leafminer has been rather hard to find this spring—it's there, but in very low numbers. Maybe it's just the natural crash after huge populations last year, maybe it's the weather, naturally-occurring predators or something else entirely. Maybe the adults have trouble flying in the strong winds we have experienced night and day for months.

In some cases, the spring flush of leaves was very badly damaged by the winds of early spring, especially on the windward side and exposed canopy. Hopefully, the lightness of leafminer damage will allow this flush to partly make up for the leaf surface area lost to wind damage.

Julian W. Sauls
Professor & Extension Horticulturist

BLOSSOM-END ROT -----

Blossom-end rot is one of those ornery cussed things that can happen to tomatoes and other vegetables for which there is no pathological explanation, i.e. it is a physiological problem. This physiological problem may cause you, the County Agent, some psychological stress due to the incessant flow of clientele into your office with the

question of : What dastardly creature has wrecked havoc upon my prize tomato patch?

First you will need to make certain that what you're looking at is indeed the dreaded blossom-end rot. Blossom-end rot is characterized early by a small yellow spot on the bottom end, i.e., the blossom end of the tomato fruit, which will eventually develop into a dark brown to black, tough, leathery lesion that may cover nearly all of the bottom of the fruit. It can be caused by uneven watering and by a deficiency of calcium. Uneven watering, particularly the lack of water, can result in drought stress to the plant which is manifest as blossom-end rot. This is easily prevented through regular irrigation and the use of mulches to reduce water loss and weed competition. The calcium deficiency can be handled with the addition of gypsum to the soil as a source of calcium at planting. Although many of our South Texas soils are calcium rich, deficiencies can occur in the spring because of cool soil temperatures; this may be remedied by planting later and possibly the use of plastic mulches to speed up warming of the soil.

Having read the above, you will notice that all control recommendations for this condition are on a preventative basis. Yes, that's right, there isn't any thing that can be done to correct this problem on existing fruit that have blossom-end rot, but normally this condition will self correct as soil temperatures rise and the season progresses. It usually is only a problem on the early fruit which is set during the cooler part of the season.

Lynn Brandenberger
Associate Professor & Extension Vegetable Specialist

RUST ON LIVE OAK -----

Rick Jahn and Isaac Cavazos, agents for San Patricio/Aransas counties informed me of a leaf rust on live oak in several locations around Rockport. Typical, circular, bright orange rust pustules are found on the underside of leaves. They correctly described the problem to me over the phone as a rust, the only problem was that there was no record in the literature of live oak having the uredial stage (i.e., orange spores) of a rust disease. Dr. Jerral Johnson has informed me that he has seen this rust on live oaks in other parts of Texas over the past twenty years. So, this apparently isn't a new disease, just one that people have not gotten around to describing.

On a visit up to Rockport, I saw some live oaks with this rust. The trees were having problems, but we attributed them to other causes, such as overwatering. I don't see this rust as representing a serious problem requiring any sort of control. However, if you were to encounter a severe case of rust (the tree looks orange from a distance), I encourage you to contact me. Such severe disease would likely cause some damage.

Thomas Isakeit
Assistant Professor & Extension Plant Pathologist

JULIAN W. SAULS, Ph.D.
Professor & Extension Horticulturist

2401 East Highway 83
Weslaco TX 78596

****

THE INFORMATION GIVEN HEREIN IS FOR EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY. REFERENCE TO COMMERCIAL PRODUCTS OR TRADE NAMES IS MADE WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT NO DISCRIMINATION IS INTENDED AND NO ENDORSEMENT BY THE COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE IS IMPLIED.

****