

Honeylocust Woes!

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Honeylocust trees across Ohio are being struck by a set of maladies and some places may have trees suffering from more than one problem. The main problems appear to be: late frost, calico scales, and plant bugs. However, some trees also had a bumper crop of flowers which have hindered leaf development. Adding to this, the honeylocust spider mites are also probably building up! I've even heard a report last week that an observant cedar waxwing enthusiast had noticed a flock of the birds snipping off leaf buds for food!!

I have to chuckle (and show my age!) as I recall statements made in the 1970s encouraging people to plant more honeylocust trees as they were “relatively pest free!” It's now obvious that we just hadn't planted enough of them to assess their real potential for problems. I fear that Callery Pears and tree lilacs will be the next on the pest hit list, but only time will tell!

Late frost damage and plant bug damage can look quite similar. (Honey Locust tree on right, almost completely defoliated by honeylocust plant bugs!) In essence, trees in the northern third of Ohio are the ones most at risk of having had a late frost event back in mid-May. Some trees had most of their young leaves completely frozen and these have now dropped causing secondary leaf buds to break. More commonly, only parts of each leaflet may have been frosted and as these expand, the resulting leaves are twisted and distorted. This twisting and distortion can look quite a bit like damage from the plant bugs! However, if plantbugs were the main culprit (many trees



have both frost and plant bugs), the little bugs should still be present. The nymphs are generally light green and the adults can be light brown (the wings) with green undersides. They run rapidly, but populations that are severe enough to cause damage should be easy to spot!

The calico scales (pictured on right) are causing quite a bit of small branch dieback, stunted leaf formation, and a general blackening of the tree trunk (from the honeydew and sooty mold). Crawlers are beginning to emerge in the southern half of Ohio, but in the northern counties, the scales are still pumping out copious honeydew.

Imidacloprid (Merit) is effective against the plant bugs and/or scales. Both soil and trunk injections work.

