Home/Garden

Pesticide reduction for lawns proves effective

By EARL ARONSON
The Associated Press

A program designed to reduce, by about 75 percent, the use of traditional pesticides in tree, shrub and lawn care service has been announced by the Davey Tree Expert Co.

The company, which operates in the United States and Canada, recently initiated a Plant Health Care concept in five geographically selected areas to test its effectiveness.

It reported that use of traditional pesticides on trees and shrubs was reduced by about 36 percent through the use of alternative materials, more effective identification of insects, diseases and plant disorders, and prescription spraying.

In five representative regions where lawn spray services were monitored, the use of insecticides and herbicides was cut, by about 40 percent and 50 percent respectively, through the use of specially designed application equipment.

Based on "these substantial reductions in pesticide use, the fact that there was no significant difference in the level of insect and weed control, and the support of Davey customers for the Plant Health Care approach," the company decided to implement these programs on a companywide basis in 1988.

"A key development in pesticide reduction resulted when Davey researchers mixed soaps with reduced amounts of pesticides," the company reported. "They found that soaps not only control pests, but also appear to act as a sticky adhesive, adhering the reduced levels of pesticides to leaves longer, providing a residual effect.

"In a five-area sample (Buffalo, N.Y.; Cleveland; Memphis, Tenn.; Minneapolis; and Pittsburgh), results show that only 1,260 gallons of traditional pesticides were used in tree foliage treatments, compared with 2,540 gallons used in the same group in 1986. Researchers were able to document that a 50 percent reduction of pesticides combined with organic soaps produced essentially the same effective results in pest control.

"This year, Davey researchers project another 25 percent reduction in traditional pesticide use in tree care. The reduction will come from spraying techniques to reduce drift and increase accuracy; use of application equipment to control pressure; and more effective plant monitoring by a trained field staff.

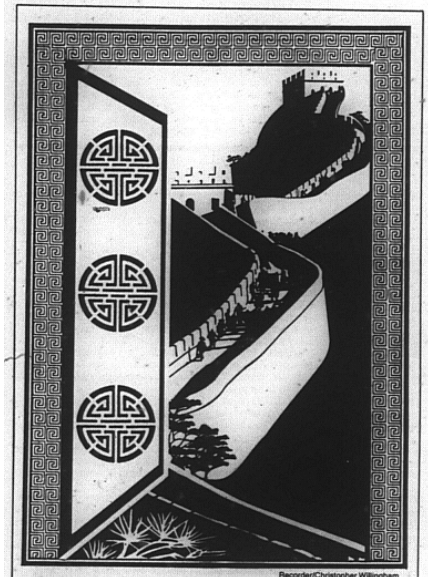
"To achieve further pesticide reductions, researchers are continuing to test alternative products, such as mineral, Neem and citrus oils, and natural pesticides derived from plants, such as Rotenone and Pyrethrum."

Davey reports it has developed a customizer with a no-drift nozzle for spot application of pesticides.

In a five-area sample of lawn operations (Akron, Ohio; Charlotte, N.C.; Minneapolis; Rochester, N.Y.; and Washington), Davey reported that 2,260 gallons of herbicides and 600 gallons of insecticides were used in 1987, compared with 4,800 gallons and 1,020 gallons, respectively, in 1985.

Davey researchers are working with nematodes (microscopic parasites), milky spores (bacteria) and natural pesticides as alternatives, which they project will account for an additional 25 percent reduction in traditional pesticide use by 1990.

Davey, which employs more than 4,000 management, field and support personnel, has developed a new employee Plant Health Care training program. It says the program is a systemic approach to developing strong, vigorous trees, shrubs and lawns through the use of diagnostic checkups, prescription pest management, proper nutrition and cultural practices.



Recorder/Christopher Willingham

Hammers: Simple tools need proper handling

By ANDY LANG
The Associated Press

The old self-deprecating remark that "I can't drive in a nail straight" is true as often as not. Lots of people can't. The reason is that a hammer seems like the simplest of tools to use and, when it fails to accomplish its purpose quite easily, its user feels a bit helpless.

Actually, a hammer IS a simple tool to use — if it is handled properly. The hammer should be grasped near the end of the handle so that you get full leverage when you strike a blow.

Use your wrist for light taps, your arm and elbow for medium blows and your full arm, including your shoulder, for heavy strikes. Hit the nail or whatever squarely. Avoid glancing blows and under strikes or over strikes.

To drive in a nail straight, rest the face of the hammer on the nail, lift it just a couple of inches and tap the head of the nail. Holding the nail with your free hand, hit it a few more taps.

Once it has set solidly into the wood, release your free hand and complete the action. If you are driving the nail into hardwood, a pilot hole should have been made to accept it, a move which helps prevent any bending of the nail. Even in softwood, it's a good idea to pierce the wood a bit with an awl or similar pointed tool.

If you have only one hammer in the house, it should be a medium-weight one of 16 ounces, although some people prefer a light hammer. The important thing about selecting a hammer is that it should feel right in your hand as you pick it up and manipulate it with your hand and wrist.

In any case, the 16-ounce hammer with a curved claw can handle the many household projects requiring the use of the relatively soft common nail. A curved claw gives more leverage for removing nails, while the straight claw is best for ripping and tearing pieces of wood. This type of hammer should not be used for masonry nails, cold chisel or other metal.

A medium-weight ball pein hammer is for striking the very small hand chisels and punches for riveting, shaping and straightening unhardened metal.

A ball pein hammer has a rounded half-ball, or peen, instead of a claw opposite its striking surface. A mallet has a rubber, wood, plastic or rawhide head to drive chisels and to hammer joints together. It is ideal for brass and jewelry work, and automobile projects where a metal hammer could damage the surface.

There are dozens of other specialty hammers of various sizes. Sledge hammers, with handles of from 14 to 36 inches, are for heavy jobs where great striking force is required. They can weigh from 2 to 20 pounds.

Hand-drilling hammers, weighing 2 to 4 pounds, are small sledge hammers with short handles and are recommended for pounding hardened nails into concrete or with tools that drive nails and pins into concrete, brick and other masonry. Some of the other specialty hammers include those for riveting, metalworking, scaling and chipping masonry, finishing welding beads, etc.

Safety goggles should always be worn when using hammers against equally hard or harder objects. This is true when using any kind of striking tool. When striking another tool with a hammer, such as a cold chisel, punch, etc., the striking face of the hammer should have approximately twice the area of the struck tool.

Other safety precautions: Never strike with the side of the hammer. Never strike one hammer with another. Never use a hammer with a loose or damaged handle. Inspect the hammer often. Discard it when the face shows excessive wear, mushrooming, dents, chips, cracks or anything that doesn't seem to be the way it was when the hammer was new.

In checking the hammer, be especially careful about looking at the edges of the face; chipping may occur.

Good bye

A salute to a Roman god

Pat Leuchtman
Between The Rows

Editor's note: Pat Leuchtman, who has written this column for several years, will be going to China to work as an editor, beginning sometime in January. During Pat's absence the column will be written by Bonnie Wodin, another Heath resident. This is Pat's last column. Bonnie's first will appear Saturday, January 7th.

Janus, the Roman god of doorways, is the ancient patron of beginnings. He has two faces, one looking east and the other to the west. As I greet this new year it is especially appropriate that I look back at the nine years I have spent here at the end of the road and then look forward to a year that promises to be filled with unimagined adventures in a teeming city. I will say good bye to my home in the west, then say hello to a temporary home in the mysterious East - Beijing, China.

Looking back, I am grateful for the lessons learned and blessings received. In my entire life I have never lived anywhere for nine years. This has certainly been a blessing. As we worked, very slowly, to tighten up our farmhouse making it warmer and more comfortable, as we worked to plant trees and gardens, I learned about patience. Houses and gardens are not built in a day.

I am not a patient person. I am always rushing. But over the past nine years, I've watched the seasons march across my landscape and enjoyed the changes that Nature and I have wrought. I've planted fruit trees, grape vines, berry bushes, flowers and a couple of dozen rose bushes near the vegetable garden. Nature has set the lightning dancing, stirred up the gales, turned streams to torrents, scattered her own seeds and breathed them to life. We have both changed the view from the kitchen window. It's just that I'm slow and Nature is more forceful.

And that is another lesson.

I used to think I was strong. I welcomed a move to the country where there was "no enemy but winter and rough weather." Now I know nature better and appreciate the work we do together, but I am humbled. I can make changes, but my strength is small.

One of the greatest blessings of staying in one place for nine years is gaining a community of good friends. It is a gift to have the time to get to know people, learn all their talents and crotchets and enjoy the variety of their experience.

Through my garden and the readers who have shared their own stories and knowledge with me, I have been enriched. I've learned from your wisdom and laughed at your stories. And learned not to take myself so seriously, to admit my mistakes and accept the fact that I'll probably make a lot more. It's taken a long time for the girl who used to do so well in school to learn that a mistake can be more instructive than a right answer.

When I first started this column, I promised to be an enthusiastic, not necessarily expert gardener. It feels strange to look forward to a stay in China labeled as a Foreign Expert working for the Foreign Experts Board. My particular job will be to "polish" the English prose produced by the Chinese writers and translators of a Chinese women's magazine that is distributed internationally.

For the past months my husband and I have talked to many people who have actually worked and traveled there. They are happy to tell us about the climate, the currency system, the most common health problems, transportation, plumbing and food. We read books and then we try to look through the fog of Hollywood images of pagodas, silk gowns embroidered with dragons and tea ceremonies, past the grainy clips of revolutionary marches, workers collectives and bureaucratic meetings on the nightly news to the reality of everyday Chinese life. But we have yet to taste that reality.

They say that every seven years all the cells in your body are replaced so that every seven years you are a new person. In 1989 I will turn 49 and my seventh (eighth?) new self will be ready for these new adventures. This is a new season in my life. I've been a student, businesswoman, teacher, writer. I pack my trunk with long underwear, a trench coat, and stout walking shoes ready to be comrade worker, a foreign correspondent, a traveller!

I walk through the doorway of the new year, trembling with anticipation and some anxiety, but confident that Janus has never closed the door to one happy experience without opening another door leading to equally rewarding adventures.

The Chinese will not celebrate their new year for a few weeks, yet this is the last time I'll stop to chat with you between the rows for a while, so I send you the traditional Chinese new year's wishes for respect, good fortune, opportunity and peace!

Recorder/Chuck Blake

Winter narcissus

Forced to blossom indoors, these narcissus show promise of a season that's still a long time and much cold weather away.

Garden Calendar

This information is provided by Karen Idoine of the University of Massachusetts Cooperative Extension Service.

Now is the time to:

- notice how winter winds move across your landscape. Do you need more shelter for vulnerable evergreen shrubs? Consider planting a windbreak next spring.
- use branches from your Christmas tree to provide extra protection for perennial and bulb beds or small shrubs.
- consider the ecological value of the work that trees do. They control erosion, reduce nutrient leaching from the soil, enhance water percolation in the soil, provide wildlife habitat and contribute to species diversity. Order your seedling trees early to assure the selection you want.
- take cuttings from evergreen hollies to propagate indoors. Remove the lower leaves from 6- to 8-inch shoots and poke into damp sand. Keep the sand moist and the foliage misted. It will help to cover the cuttings with clear, ventilated plastic and to provide some bottom heat. Maintain cuttings in a bright, cool location until roots are well-established in about three months.
- look for All-America Selections, such as Coreopsis Early Sunrise, for 1989, as you browse through seed catalogs. This selection is a perennial that behaves as an annual, flowering early and continuing to flower under adverse and variable conditions throughout the summer.
- prune maple, birch, honey locust, walnut, magnolia and poplar for balance and aesthetic quality in January. These species produce a heavy sap flow in later winter, and should be pruned prior to that time.
- plant gloxinia tubers. They will bloom in March.

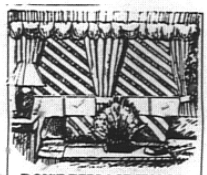
Pruning reminder

This information is provided by Karen Idoine of the University of Massachusetts Cooperative Extension Service.

Be aware that the USDA has changed some of its advice on pruning trees.

Instead of making a flush cut as close to the main stem as possible, leave the slightly swollen base of the branch, called the branch collar, intact. The plant will produce new cells quickly from this area to heal the wound.

For more complete information, and a diagram, consult the 1989 University of Massachusetts Cooperative Extension Garden Calendar, or your Cooperative Extension office.



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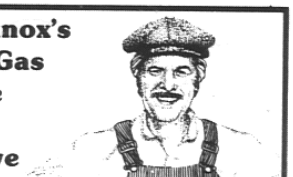

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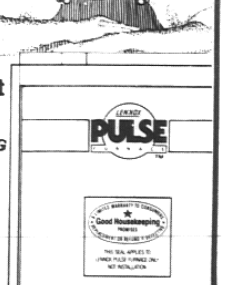

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