

NEWS RELEASE
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BLUE OAK PROBLEMS

BACKYARD HORTICULTURE

By Gary W. Hickman, Horticulture Advisor
University of California Cooperative Extension, Mariposa County

After the late spring rains, this summer has produced a bumper crop of new oak seedlings in Mariposa County. Unfortunately, record heat in July has dried out the soil earlier than normal. If you would like to encourage the survival of some of these new seedlings, a thorough irrigation every two weeks or so should greatly help. For larger established oak trees, remember to never apply water near the trunk. The trees are most susceptible to fungal rots in this area and keeping the trunk area moist encourages growth of these diseases. Also, most of the active absorbing roots are located at the dripline (ends of branches) and out from there.

Another common problem, especially on Blue Oak, *Quercus douglasii*, is powdery mildew. This fungus causes a white flour-like growth on leaves. It is especially noticeable on young succulent growth. It is not uncommon for small, faster growing, branches to be infected and other, slower growing, trees apparently unaffected. As it turns out, this powdery mildew fungus grows better on young tender leaves. A common misconception is that powdery mildew prefers high humidity to grow. In reality, free water, in the form of rain or a soaking from the garden hose, actually kills powdery mildew spores. If you have infected trees, a thorough washing with plain water can offer

significant control. In most cases, chemical controls are not warranted, as this disease usually does not kill plants.

For more information on managing oaks, a two hour seminar is being offered called "Living among the Oaks," August 14, 2003, in Mariposa. Call the U.C. Cooperative Extension office at 966-2417 for registration details.

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