

NEWS RELEASE
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WINTER SPRAYS FOR HOME ORCHARDS

BACKYARD HORTICULTURE

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Up until late February when temperatures rise and trees start to bud out, gardeners can apply dormant sprays to home deciduous fruit trees to control a variety of pests and diseases. The use of dormant sprays fits well with home gardening, because there are a broad range of spray materials available for use, and a wide period of time to apply them. Also, you can control several pests with a single spraying. If you wait until after pruning, you should be able to obtain maximum spray coverage because there are no leaves on the tree to block your spray. Further, there is little risk of phytotoxicity (damaging the tree with the spray material), and less risk of injuring beneficial insects than any other time of year.

A common problem this year is bacterial canker. The symptoms of this disease include limb dieback with rough cankers and amber colored gum. There may also be leaf spot and blast of young flowers and shoots. The sour sap phase of bacterial canker may not show gum and cankers, but the inner bark is brown, fermented, and sour smelling. Flecks and pockets of bacterial invasion in bark occur outside canker margins. Frequently, trees sucker from near ground level; cankers do not extend below ground. Unfortunately, bactericide applications have no reliable effect on bacterial canker and their use is not recommended.

However, other common pests such as borers, scale, and the overwintering eggs of aphids and mites may all be controlled with a properly applied dormant spray oil. If you add a fixed copper fungicide to the mixture you can also control such common and

troublesome diseases as peach leaf curl and shothole disease as well. Be sure to read and follow all label directions before using any pesticide.

Codling moths, which give you wormy apples, cannot be controlled with dormant sprays. You still need to apply sprays during the growing season to keep this pest out of your apples and pears.

The time for dormant spray treatments is up to the latter part of February, or just before the flower buds have begun to open. Once flower buds begin opening, you risk damaging them and killing the pollinating bees with the sprays. Another advantage of using the dormant period to spray is that you may do a better job of controlling mite eggs at that time, as the shells become thinner when they approach hatching.

Be aware that you can injure your deciduous fruit trees with oil sprays if the trees have been drought stressed. That should not be a serious problem this year, as we've had good winter rains already. However, in dry years you should irrigate your trees deeply before applying dormant oil sprays. Another caution is to avoid applying dormant oil sprays to walnut trees, as they are very easily damaged by oil treatments.

If you have peach trees, call our office at 966-2417 and ask for the free leaflet on Peach Leaf Curl control.

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