Plant Health Care Report

Scouting Report of The Morton Arboretum

Aug 22, 2025 **Issue 2025.11**

For comments regarding PHCR, or to subscribe to email alerts regarding posting of new issues, contact me at syiesla@mortonarb.org.

Our report includes up-to-date disease and insect pest reports for northeastern Illinois. For disease and insect problems, contact the Plant Clinic via email at plantclinic@mortonarb.org or by phone 630-719-2424 (Monday through Friday, noon to 4 pm)

This is our last issue of the year.
Thanks for reading. See you next April.

Quick View

What indicator plant is in bloom at the Arboretum?

Chicory (*Cichorium intybus)* (fig. 1) is in flower.

Accumulated Growing Degree Days (Base 50) at The Morton Arboretum: 2421 (as of Aug 21)

Insects/other pests

- **Home invaders**
- **Brown marmorated stink bug**
- **Fall galls**

Diseases

- **Head blight of *Silphium***

Miscellaneous

- **Seasonal needle drop**
- **Next season starts now**

Figure 1 Chicory (photo: John Hagstrom)

Soil temperatures around Illinois (from Illinois State Water Survey)

This information will be provided all season. For data from other reporting stations, go to https://warm.isws.illinois.edu/warm/soil/ (you will need to set up an account to access data.)

Max. Soil temps For 8/21/2025*	St. Charles reporting station (north)	Champaign reporting station (central)	Carbondale reporting station (south)
2-inch, bare soil	87.3	100.7	80.6
4-inch, bare soil	79.7	89.4	83.2
4-inch, under sod	77.1	85.7	79.7
8-inch, under sod	77.2	80.4	79

* This is the maximum soil temperature recorded the day prior to publication of PHCR.

Seasonal precipitation

Seasonal precipitation (rain and melted snow) in inches.			
	2025	2024	Historical average (1937-2024)
Jan	.97	3.42	1.96
Feb	1.3	.56	1.8
Mar	4.59	3.68	2.55
April	3.32 (this value has been corrected)	4.44	3.66
May	1.86	3.73	4.16
June	4.78	5.29	4.18
July	6.11	4.79	3.96
Aug	5.79 (thru 8/21)	3.44 (whole month)	3.75 (whole month)
Year to date	28.71 (thru 8/21)	29.35 (thru Aug)	26.01 (thru Aug)

Degree Days (current and compared to past years) and rainfall

The historical average (1937-2024) for this date at The Morton Arboretum is 2190 GDD_{50}. The table below shows a comparison of GDD in different years. We are comparing the GDD_{50} reported in this issue with the GDD reported in the first issue of last year, 2019 and 2014. These years were selected since publication dates of the first issue were within a day or two of each other. Glencoe, and Waukegan (60085) were not used in 2019 and 2014, so there is 'no report' from those stations. Lisle was not used in 2014, so there is 'no report'.

Location	GDD as of 8/21/2025	GDD as of 8/22/2024	GDD as of 8/22/2019	GDD as of 8/21/2014
Carbondale, IL*	3398	3403	3115	2886
Champaign, IL*	2889	2786	2660	2472
Chicago Botanic Garden**	No report	2347	No report	1824
Glencoe*	1870	1979	1687	No report
Chicago O'Hare*	2575	2674	2315	2289
Kankakee, IL*	2531	2533	2390	2260
Lisle, IL*	2621	2694	2366	No report
The Morton Arboretum	2421	2369	2140.5	1972.5
Quincy, IL*	2928	2993	2761	2643
Rockford, IL*	2374	2397	2157	1982
Springfield, IL*	2931	2924	2735	2558
Waukegan, IL* (60087)	2177	2305	1966	1992
Waukegan, IL* (60085)	2316	2445	2071	No report

*We obtain most of our degree day information from the GDD Tracker from Michigan State University web site. For additional locations and daily degree days, go to https://gddtracker.msu.edu/

**Thank you to Elizabeth Cullison, Chicago Botanic Garden, for supplying us with this information.

How serious is it?

Problems that can definitely compromise the health of the plant will be marked "serious". Problems that have the potential to be serious and which may warrant chemical control measures will be marked "potentially serious". Problems that are seldom serious enough for pesticide treatment will be marked "minor". "Aggressive" will be used for weeds that spread quickly and become a problem and "dangerous" for weeds that might pose a risk to humans.

Pest Updates: Insects

Home invaders (minor)

When the weather finally turns cold, some pests will become home invaders. Boxelder bugs (*Boisea trivittata*) are usually the number one complaint (although the brown marmorated stink bug, see article below, is vying for the title). These insects feed on sap of seeds, flowers, and leaves of boxelders (*Acer negundo*). Their feeding causes little damage to the tree. Boxelder bugs (fig. 2) are considered a nuisance when large numbers of them appear in homes, especially in fall and spring. Nymphs are bright red when they first hatch, developing black wing pads over time. Adults are about ½ inch long, have three red or orange lines in back of their heads, and have black wings with red lines, and a red abdomen. Boxelder bugs overwinter as adults in protected sites. Since they consider your house to be a protected site, if you have cracks in your foundation or around your windows, they will enter your house through those cracks in fall. They do no harm indoors, but are annoying.

Figure 2 Boxelder bugs: nymph (above) , adult (below)

While boxelder bugs show up like clockwork every year, some home invaders are occasional guests. These include the multi-colored Asian lady beetle, the leaf-footed beetle and squash bugs. The multi-colored Asian lady beetles (*Harmonia axyridis*) are beneficial insects that eat pests like aphids. In fall, they can become an annoyance when they enter the home, sometimes in large numbers. They are not only annoying, they can bite! They can be yellow, red or orange in color and may have no spots or as many as 19. The front of the body is cream-colored with a black 'M' (perhaps a monogram for 'multi-colored'?). Go to http://bugguide.net/index.php?q=search&keys=Harmonia&search=Search for photos.

Leaf-footed bugs and squash bugs often enter homes one at a time and so are easy to manage. Go to http://bugguide.net/node/view/16073/bgimage and https://bugguide.net/node/view/67889

Management: Do not use insecticides inside the home. Caulk around doors and windows to minimize entry by the insects. Keep screens in good repair. Insects that do enter the home can be removed with a vacuum or manually. Do not crush boxelder bugs or ladybugs as they can leave a stain. The leaf-footed bug is related to stink bugs and will make a stink when handled. Squash bugs can make a stink and a stain when crushed.

Good website: https://mortonarb.org/plant-and-protect/tree-plant-care/plant-care-resources/boxelder-bugs/

Brown marmorated stink bug (minor indoors, potentially serious outdoors)

Speaking of home invaders: brown marmorated stink bugs or BMSB **(***Halyomorpha halys*) are showing up more often now in the Chicago area. These insects overwinter in houses and become active again in spring. BMSB will feed on a variety of hosts including many fruit, vegetable and field crops, reducing yield on those crops. They have become a serious pest on crops in some states. There are other insects that resemble the BMSB, so check the websites listed below to see more pictures of this insect. The insect is similar in shape to other stink bugs (a somewhat 'shield-shaped' body), but the edge of the body has alternating black and white bands (fig. 3). The antennae will have light-colored bands on them. Overall, the body has a mottled appearance. When the weather cools off, adults will look to overwinter in homes, much like boxelder bugs.

Figure 3 Brown marmorated stink bug adult

Management: Managing this pest in the home is similar to managing boxelder bugs in the home. Caulk cracks and keep screens in good repair. Physically remove the insects in the home with a vacuum cleaner. These are stink bugs, and they do create a stink when threatened so removal by hand could be tricky. After removal by vacuum, the vacuum cleaner may have a smell for a while. The insects can also be knocked into a bucket of soapy water and drowned.

Good websites with photos for identification:
https://njaes.rutgers.edu/stink-bug/identify.php
http://www.stopbmsb.org/stink-bug-basics/look-alike-insects/

Fall galls (minor)

We are featuring a nice selection of late season galls for you this week. We write about these just so you know what you are looking at. Most galls are very minor and we don't need to treat for them.

We have two galls showing up on goldenrod. They are the goldenrod fly gall and the goldenrod bunch gall.

The goldenrod fly gall (*Eurosta solidaginis*) shows up as those interesting ball shapes (fig. 4) in the goldenrod stem. The gall maker lives inside that round gall and will pupate there in spring.

Figure 4 Goldenrod fly gall (Photo: S. Yiesla)

The goldenrod bunch gall is caused by a midge (*Rhopalomyia solidaginis*). The larva of this midge secretes a chemical that stops the goldenrod stem from growing any taller. The leaves keep forming, though. This leads to a bunch of shortened leaves at the end of the stem (fig. 5). Actually, very pretty!

Figure 5 Goldenrod bunch gall

We have seen a lot of galls this summer, and most of them are the ones we see year after year. I have been eagerly awaiting one my favorites, but it has not been reported yet. Here it is anyway, just so you recognize it. It is the oak lobed gall (fig. 6), sometimes called the pine cone oak gall, and it is a crowd-pleaser. It shows up on oaks and looks a bit like a pine cone, due to actually being a cluster of small wedge-shaped galls. The whole cluster is often 2 to 3 inches across and goes through some interesting color changes (pinks, reds and browns), that really get it noticed. Oak lobed gall is most commonly found on swamp white oak and bur oak. It is caused by a tiny wasp, *Andricus quercusstrobilanus* (a cool name for a cool gall maker). Like other galls we commonly see, it does not harm the tree.

Figure 6 Oak lobed gall

Another cool gall was reported by one of our scouts a few years ago. I did happen upon it myself once while photographing prairie plants. It was found on *Rudbeckia*. The gall produces an amazing distortion of parts of the flowering head (fig. 7), in one case, to the point of rendering the flower nearly unrecognizable. It is caused by a midge, *Asphondylia rudbeckiaeconspicua.*

Figure 7 Gall on Rudbeckia (photo: L. Miranda)

And for something new, our scout found AND identified a gall I had never seen before, the carbonifera or ambrosia gall on goldenrod (fig. 8). This gall is caused by the gall midge *Asteromyia carbonifera*. This is a cool gall to look at, but the back story on this gall is really interesting. To see that story, check out this article by Joe Boggs of OSU Extension. A number of good photos of this gall can be found on iNaturalist.

Good websites:
https://bugguide.net/node/view/569331/bgimage
https://bugguide.net/node/view/225386

Figure 8 Ambrosia gall on goldenrod (Photo: L. Miranda)

Pest Updates: Diseases

Head blight of *Silphium* (minor)

One of our scouts found head blight on *Silphium* (fig. 9) at The Arboretum. The flower heads die and turn black and form a shepherd's crook before they bloom. If the flowers open, they do not blight. About one-inch below the base of the flower the stem is pinched and sometimes white fungal growth (mycellium) is present. This disease can affect all species of *Silphium* (rosinweed, prairie dock, compass plant and cup plant).

Figure 9 Head blight on Silphium

Management: Sanitation is the best way to prevent spread or infection for next year. Clip off all affected tissue and rake up fallen debris and remove it from the site. The blight doesn't seem to affect the overall health of the plant. It just causes a loss of the flowers.

Miscellaneous

Seasonal needle drop

A phenomenon of fall is heading our way soon: seasonal needle drop (also known as normal needle drop). In autumn, many evergreens will drop older needles. This is a normal process. Needles on an evergreen live for a limited number of years. At the end of their lives, these needles will turn yellow or brown and eventually fall off. On some evergreens, such as white pine or arborvitae, this process can be very dramatic, making the evergreen look like it is dying. To determine if your tree has a disease or is going through normal needle drop, check the location of the yellow or brown needles. Trees going through normal needle drop will have a fairly uniform brown or yellow appearance in the interior of the tree since this is where the oldest needles are located (fig. 10). After a few weeks these needles will fall off, leaving the tree looking normal and healthy. Trees with a disease may have brown needles in various areas of the tree, depending on the disease, but the appearance will not be as uniform as that of needle drop. Diseased needles may eventually fall off, but the tree won't look healthy.

Figure 10 Seasonal needle drop on white pine

Good website: https://mortonarb.org/plant-and-protect/tree-plant-care/plant-care-resources/seasonal-needle-drop/

Next season is now

Normally at this time of year we are gearing down from one growing season and planning for the next. We may need to rethink that concept. The current growing season is impacted by the ones that preceded it and will have impact on the one coming up. Plants are living and growing in a continuum. Winter is not a holiday between growing seasons. In some years, our growing seasons are getting longer. Last autumn was warm and dry and went on for a long time. Timing on practices like watering and pruning need to adapt to these changes. We can't really garden by the calendar anymore. So many horticultural practices revolved around 'the first frost'. Now, in some years, we have a frost and then the weather gets warm and beautiful for six more weeks. That 'first frost' has lost its place as a guidepost. Take some time to look at Plant Health Care as a more holistic process. We need to think about updating some of our practices.

***Bartlett Tree Experts, Presenting Sponsor of the Plant Clinic*.**

The Plant Health Care Report is prepared by Sharon Yiesla, M.S., Plant Knowledge Specialist and edited by Fredric Miller, Ph.D., Research Entomologist at The Morton Arboretum; and Juluia Lamb, Arboretum Volunteer. The information presented is believed to be accurate, but the authors provide no guarantee and will not be held liable for consequences of actions taken based on the information.

Thank you...I would like to thank all the staff and volunteers that report disease and pest problems when they find them. Your hard work is appreciated. Our volunteer scouts for 2025 are Deb Link, Maureen Livingston, Loraine Miranda, Molly Neustadt and Moira Silverman.

Literature/website recommendations:
Indicator plants are chosen because of work done by Donald A. Orton, which is published in the book Coincide, The Orton System of Pest and Disease Management.

Additional information on growing degree days can be found at:
http://www.ipm.msu.edu/agriculture/christmas_trees/gdd_of_landscape_insects
http://extension.unh.edu/resources/files/Resource000986_Rep2328.pdf

This report is available as a PDF at The Morton Arboretum website at https://mortonarb.org/about-arboretum/plant-health-care-report/

For pest and disease questions, please contact the Plant Clinic. You can contact the Plant Clinic via email at plantclinic@mortonarb.org . Emails will be answered during business hours Monday through Friday. You can call the Plant Clinic (630-719-2424) or visit in person, Monday thru Friday noon to 4 pm. Inquiries or comments about the PHCR should be directed to Sharon Yiesla at syiesla@mortonarb.org .

2025 Plant Health Care Report Index

Following is an index of the various subjects in this year's report. The number after each subject is the report number. For example, using the chart below, Ficaria verna….. 1 means that it was discussed in the PHCR 2025.01 or the newsletter dated April 4, 2025. The index is updated with the publication of each full issue and is included at the end of each full issue.

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