Plant Health Care Report

Scouting Report of The Morton Arboretum

June 12, 2026 **Issue 2026.6**

For comments regarding PHCR, or to subscribe to email alerts regarding posting of new issues, contact Sharon Yiesla 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).

Quick View

What indicator plant is in bloom at the Arboretum?

Catalpa (*Catalpa* species) is in flower (fig. 1)

Accumulated Growing Degree Days (Base 50) at The Morton Arboretum: 800.5 (as of June 11)

Insects/other pests

- Viburnum leaf beetle update

Diseases

- Apple scab
- Anthracnose on shade trees
- Slime mold and stinkhorns

Weeds

- Weeds or not

Native corner

- Selecting native plants

Figure 1 Catalpa speciosa (photo: S. Yiesla)

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 6/11/2026	St. Charles reporting station (north)	Champaign reporting station (central)	Carbondale reporting station (south)
2-inch, bare soil	80.7	90.6	99.3
4-inch, bare soil	74.9	87.8	92.6
4-inch, under sod	76	86.3	85.2
8-inch, under sod	74.2	79.7	83

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

Seasonal precipitation

Seasonal precipitation (rain and melted snow) in inches.			
	2026	2025	Historical average (1937-2025)
Jan	2.33	.97	1.95
Feb	.14	1.3	1.79
Mar	5.22	4.59	2.57
April	5.32	3.32	3.66
May	1.78	1.86	4.14
June	3.75 (thru 6/11)	4.77 (full month)	4.19 (full month)
July			
Aug			
Sept			
Year to date	18.54 (thru 6/11)	16.81 (thru June)	18.29 (thru June)

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

The historical average (1937-2025) for this date at The Morton Arboretum is 563GDD_{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, 2020 and 2014. These years were selected since publication dates of the first issue were within a day or two of each other. Lisle, Glencoe, and Waukegan (60085) were not used in 2015, so there is 'no report' from those stations.

Location	GDD as of 6/11/2026	GDD as of 6/12/2025	GDD as of 6/11/2020	GDD as of 6/11/2015
Carbondale, IL*	1553	1282	1003	1136
Champaign, IL*	1140	946	760	960
Chicago Botanic Garden**	748	768	583	494
Glencoe*	396	255	345	No report
Chicago O'Hare*	866	670	644	730
Kankakee, IL*	953	710	680	783
Lisle, IL*	898	702	370	No report
The Morton Arboretum	800.5	544	652.5	599.5
Quincy, IL*	1267	997	824	1030
Rockford, IL*	842	647	609	607
Springfield, IL*	1268	954	816	1020
Waukegan, IL* (60087)	676	471	511	542
Waukegan, IL* (60085)	744	541	548	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

Examples of insects that may emerge soon in northern Illinois (based on growing degree days)			
GDD (base 50)	insect	Life stage present at this GDD	Type of damage
700-800	Bagworm	Caterpillars emerging	Chewing foliage
900-1200	Japanese beetle	adults	Chewing foliage; mating and laying eggs
Possibly 1200-1300	Viburnum leaf beetles	Adults emerging	Chewing on leaves
1200-1800	Fall webworm	Caterpillars feeding, but webbing not seen yet	Chewing on leaves

Viburnum leaf beetle update (serious)

The viburnum leaf beetle larvae are now likely to be underground pupating. At this point, we can do nothing to manage them. The adults should emerge in early July (possibly very late June this year). The beetles are small (1/3 inch) and brown to golden brown (fig. 2). They are not easily noticed, but their feeding is. They will pick up where the larvae left off.

Figure 2 Adult viburnum leaf beetle

Management: Adults can be treated with a variety of insecticides. Insecticidal soap is **not** effective on the adults. They have hard bodies and insecticidal soap works primarily on soft bodied insects. Do not spray for the adults until they are present. Insecticide sprays are not preventative.

Pest Updates: Diseases

Apple scab (potentially serious)

Apple scab is showing up on crabapples. We are seeing development of the leaf spots. Early lesions look like olive-green leaf spots and will continue to develop into larger, irregular dark spots. Often lesions develop along the mid-veins of the leaves. Infected leaves eventually turn yellow (fig. 3) and drop prematurely on susceptible hosts. This defoliation can stress and weaken the tree, especially if it happens year after year. The fungus which causes scab (*Venturia inaequalis*) overwinters on fallen leaves and on

Figure 3 Apple scab

lesions on twigs. Sunken spots may appear later on fruits, and susceptible crabapples can be completely defoliated in severe disease years. Scab severity is a product of a specific temperature range, duration of moisture on leaves, and host susceptibility. Scab severity is worse in wet springs.

Management: The best way to avoid apple scab is to plant resistant varieties. "Resistant" just means that. In a typical year, a resistant plant won't suffer as much from the disease as a susceptible plant. However, it may exhibit symptoms in "bad" scab years. When shopping for new crabapples, ask your local nursery which scab-resistant varieties they stock. Caring for your trees, such as watering during summer droughts, may moderate effects of defoliation and reduced photosynthesis in affected trees. As the fungus overwinters on fallen leaves and blighted twigs, collecting and destroying them may help reduce the source of inoculum next year. It is too late to treat for this disease now. Spraying for apple scab needs to begin when leaves begin to emerge and should continue at labeled intervals.

Good websites: http://www.mortonarb.org/trees-plants/tree-and-plant-advice/help-diseases/apple-scab

Anthracnose on shade trees (minor in most cases)

Figure 4 Anthracnose on maple

We had a rainy March and April, then rainfall lessened but did not go away completely. Now fungal diseases called anthracnose are starting to show up. The anthracnose diseases are primarily foliar diseases affecting many deciduous trees including ash, elm, oak, and maple. We have had reports of infection on red, sugar (fig. 4) and silver maples so far. Often, we don't see a lot of defoliation with anthracnose (except for sycamore anthracnose), but we will need to see how the disease develops this year. Defoliation is not fatal, but it will put some additional stress on trees as their "food factories", the leaves, drop off prematurely. The food that trees make for themselves is different from what fertilizers provide, so extra fertilization is not warranted.

Figure 5 Anthracnose on oak

The fungi are able to infect the young, tender leaves, especially during cool and wet spells. These diseases are caused by several different fungi. The fungi are host specific, so the maple fungus doesn't infect oak trees, and so on. Symptoms vary with the plant host, weather, and time of year when infection occurs, but this disease often produces brown or black blotches (fig. 5) and curled or twisted leaves. Infection is more severe when prolonged spring rains occur

after new growth is produced. Although the symptoms appear in late spring into the summer, the initial infection took place in the early spring at bud break and before the leaves hardened off. Once the symptoms show up, it is too late for any chemical applications to be effective.

Management: Cultural methods are usually sufficient to reduce the severity of anthracnose in our region. These include:

- Pruning trees to open up the canopy for better air circulation.
- Maintaining tree vigor with proper watering during times when rain is inadequate.
- In the fall, cleaning up and destroying fallen leaves to reduce the source of inoculum.

Good website: https://mortonarb.org/plant-and-protect/tree-plant-care/plant-care-resources/anthracnose-of-shade-trees/

Slime molds and stinkhorns (minor)

This year we have had off and on periods of rain. With bouts of rain usually comes the question "What is that stuff on my mulch?" Rainfall (and watering our gardens a lot) leads to a variety of strange looking growths in the garden.

Figure 6 Slime mold (dried)

A weird growth that is showing up now is slime mold, a decay organism. When it is growing on the mulch, it is trying to decompose the mulch. Slime mold, when fresh, comes in nice colors like yellow and pink, and it looks like a puddle, the kind of puddle that makes you wonder if your dog needs to go to the veterinarian. As it dries, some of the color goes away, and the puddle becomes a dry crust (fig. 6). When it has dried, slip the blade of your shovel under it and lift it away to the garbage.

Figure 7 Stinkhorns

Another candidate in the "what is that" category is the stinkhorn. Stinkhorns are a type of mushroom, but they merit a mention because they really capture our attention. They come in an interesting array of colors and, guess what, they stink. If the smell does not get your attention, the crowd of flies around them will. A common type is reddish-orange and sort of looks like carrots growing upside down in the mulch (fig. 7). But they do come in many weird colors and even vulgar shapes (fig. 8). One thing that intrigues people is that the stinkhorn grows out of a structure that looks like an egg. Just as with slime mold, we can slip our shovel blade in and lift them away to the garbage.

Figure 8 Stinkhorn

Pest Updates: Weeds

Weeds, or not?

We are starting to see a variety of 'weeds' that may be weeds, or not. The reason I put that word in quotes is that all of the plants in question are native plants, but ones that can get very busy and take over the yard. So, let's look at who is showing up in home gardens all over the region, as well as on the Arboretum grounds.

Figure 9 Stickseed

Our first contender (fig. 9) is stickseed (*Hackelia virginiana*). We have been aware of this weed for many years. This one is tricky. Early in its growth, it resembles purple coneflower. So, most people assume that their coneflower made seedlings and they stop thinking about it. Then, before they know if, this plant has flowered and made seed pods. The seed pods are small and covered with little hooks like a bur. Once they are on your gardening gloves, they are almost impossible to remove. Get this one before it goes to seed. When I see this one in my yard, I get rid of it as soon as I can.

Our second weed (fig. 10) is black snakeroot (*Sanicula odorata*). It is native to most of Illinois, but we don't generally get inquiries about it. For the last few years, it has been easy to find. There are other species of *Sanicula* out there, but we feel we have mostly been seeing *Sanicula odorata*. It has yellow-green flowers, while the other species have greenish-white flowers. If this plant is happy in your yard it may form colonies, especially in shady sites. Some people consider that naturalizing, some think of it as weedy. Your call.

Figure 10 Black snakeroot

Our third and fourth plants are related; they belong to the same genus. They are butterweed (*Packera glabella*) and golden ragwort (*Packera aurea*). Butterweed (fig. 11) is a native of Illinois, but is far more common in the southern half of the state than it is in the Chicago region. Yet, we have had numerous reports of it this year, and I even found one in my yard. This plant does well in partial to full sun and is reported to prefer a loamy soil, with moist to wet conditions. The one in my yard is growing up in an area so dry and hard I have not even attempted to garden there.

I was so impressed by this plant's tenacity that I let it stay there. Butterweed is actually fairly attractive, with yellow daisy-like flowers, that provide nectar for pollinators. It flowers for 6 to 8 weeks. The leaves are interesting too, being deeply and irregularly cut. Those leaves contain alkaloids which prevent rabbits and deer from feeding on them.

Figure 11 Butterweed

Golden ragwort is a cousin to butterweed and has similar yellow flowers that also provide for pollinators. The basal leaves of this plant are oval to almost rounded, with rounded teeth. Leaves higher on the stem are much smaller, narrower and deeply dissected. The leaves of this plant also contain the alkaloids. I have seen this one for sale at a local garden center.

Are all these plants weeds or wildflowers? This is a decision each person has to make. They are native plants, but every native is not desirable (poison ivy is native, too). Weigh the pros (benefits to pollinators) and cons (potential to colonize too much) of each plant. I have linked the name of each plant to a webpage, so you can gain more information to make that decision. I wanted to present these here since they are showing up so much in our area. Hopefully, this article at least answers the question "What plant is that?" for you.

Good websites:
https://bygl.osu.edu/node/1023
https://farmdoc.illinois.edu/field-crop-production/weeds/what-is-that-yellow-flowered-plant.html

Native corner

Selecting native plants

With the increased interest in native plants, many people are looking for help to select the right ones for their yards. The Morton Arboretum website offers a helpful tool in the form of an online plant selector called Search Trees and Plants. This is a very simple to use tool.

If you want to look at native wildflowers, select the green box that says "Perennials". That takes all the other plants out of the search. Then click on the white search box that says "More filters". When the sidebar opens on the right of the screen, click on "Native locale" and choose one of the geographic locations, like "Chicago area" for example. Go to the bottom of the sidebar and click on "Apply filter". That shows all the flowers native to the Chicago area that

are currently on the website. To narrow the field, go back to “More filters” and select another filter that is important to you, like “Size range’ or “Light exposure”. Each search brings up a list of plants that fit the selected parameters and each plant has its own page of information.

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 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 .

2026 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 2026.01 or the newsletter dated April 3, 2026. The index is updated with the publication of each full issue and is included at the end of each full issue.

2026.1	April 3	2026.4	May 15
2026.2	April 17	2026.5	May 29
2026.3	May 1	2026.6	June 12