

Plant Health Care Report

Scouting Report of The Morton Arboretum



THE
CHAMPION
of TREES

July 10, 2026

Issue 2026.8

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?

Wild hydrangea (*Hydrangea arborescens*) is in full flower (fig. 1).

Accumulated Growing Degree Days (Base 50) at The Morton Arboretum: 1385 (as of July 9)

Insects/other pests

- Spotted lanternfly
- Fall Webworm
- Zimmerman pine moth
- Annual cicadas

Diseases

- Oak wiltor not?
- Bur oak blight

Weeds

- Helleborine

Miscellaneous

- Dieback, cankers, stress and the weather
- Herbicide damage



Figure 1 Wild hydrangea

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 7/9/2026	St. Charles reporting station (north)	Champaign reporting station (central)	Carbondale reporting station (south)
2-inch, bare soil	86.7	101.1	88.4
4-inch, bare soil	78.2	95.6	84.4
4-inch, under sod	80.3	87.1	81.7
8-inch, under sod	78.1	81.6	81.5

* 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	8.05	4.77	4.19
July	6.19 (as of 7/9)	6.11 (whole month)	3.98 (whole month)
Aug			
Sept			
Year to date	29.03 (thru 7/9)	22.92 (thru July)	22.27 (thru July)

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

The historical average (1937-2025) for this date at The Morton Arboretum is 1182 GDD₅₀. The table below shows a comparison of GDD in different years. We are comparing the GDD₅₀ 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 7/9/2026	GDD as of 7/10/2025	GDD as of 7/9/2020	GDD as of 7/9/2015
Carbondale, IL*	2295	2114	1763	1913
Champaign, IL*	1784	1738	1481	1588
Chicago Botanic Garden**	1352	1540	1249	959
Glencoe*	886	859	880	No report
Chicago O'Hare*	1488	1461	1334	1278
Kankakee, IL*	1568	1472	1375	1342
Lisle, IL*	1527	1508	1375	No report
The Morton Arboretum	1385	1290	1324	1099.5
Quincy, IL*	1945	1771	1549	1680
Rockford, IL*	1430	1378	1269	1091
Springfield, IL*	1938	1773	1533	1664
Waukegan, IL* (60087)	1240	1175	1127	1013
Waukegan, IL* (60085)	1329	1277	1180	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
1200-1800	Fall webworm	Caterpillars feeding, but webbing not seen yet	Chewing on leaves
1934	Spotted lanternfly	Adult emergence	Feeding on sap; honeydew in large quantities
1950	Magnolia scale	Crawlers <u>begin</u> to emerge	Feeding on sap

Spotted lanternfly (potentially serious to serious)

Spotted lanternfly (SLF) (*Lycorma delicatula*) has been a pest in Pennsylvania since 2014. Since that time, it has spread to other eastern states like New York, Maryland, New Jersey and Virginia. In the last year or two, there have been isolated reports of this pest in Ohio, Indiana, and Michigan. In late 2023, isolated populations of the insect were identified in the Chicago region. Discovery of isolated populations does not mean the insect is established in Northern Illinois, but it does mean we should be watchful. The [USA National Phenology Network](#) forecasts that (if the insect is present locally), adults could be present in the Chicago region sometime in the next week or two.

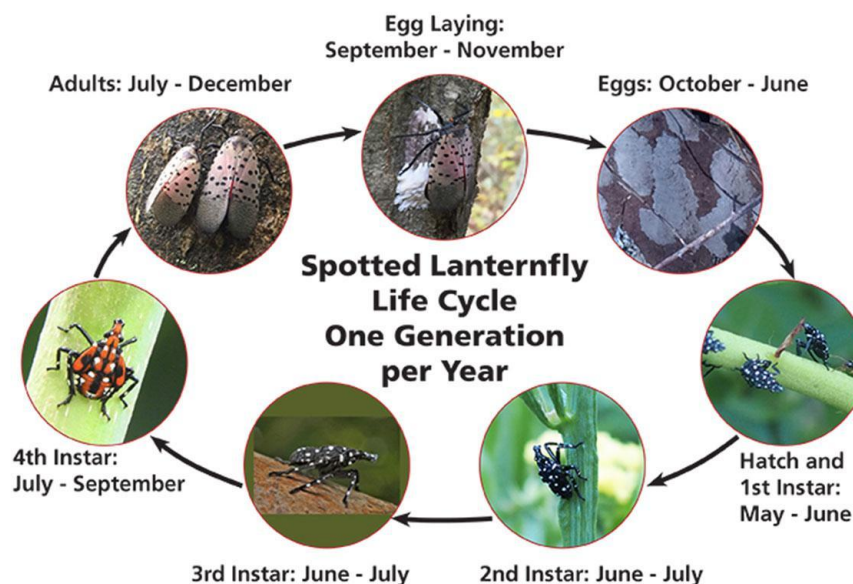


Figure 2 Illustration by Cornell CALS

SLF overwinters as egg masses (fig. 2). The female insect lays these non-descript looking egg masses on host plants, but also on hard surfaces, like bricks, wood pallets, and vehicles. The nymphs hatch out in spring and early summer. Newly hatched nymphs are white, but soon become black with white spots. Late-stage instar nymphs will be red with white spots. The nymphs mature into adults beginning in mid-summer. The adult is not a true fly, but rather a

planthopper. It is about one inch long. When at rest, the pinkish-gray wings are folded over the insect's back. The wings are marked by small black spots. In flight, the bright red hindwings can be seen. They are also marked with small black spots. The adults begin to lay egg masses in September and may continue to do so until a freeze.

The host range for SLF is large, more than 70 species. Preferred hosts include Tree of heaven, grapes, black walnut, hops and tuliptree. Other hosts include maple, willow, birch, and sycamore. This is a sap-feeding insect and it can feed very heavily on a host plant and weaken it. This has been a major issue for grape producers. Like other sap-feeders, this insect will produce honeydew, which is a sticky substance. Spotted lanternfly differs from other sap-feeders in that it can produce extremely large amounts of honeydew. This can become a nuisance for any activity being conducted under infested trees. Sooty mold, a dark colored fungal problem, grows readily on the honeydew. The honeydew also attracts other insects like bees and wasps.

If you suspect spotted lanternfly in your area, take a photo and send a detailed email to: lanternfly@illinois.edu including when, where, and specifics of the location.

Good websites: <https://mortonarb.org/plant-and-protect/tree-plant-care/plant-care-resources/spotted-lanternfly/>
<https://ilpestsurvey.inhs.illinois.edu/pest-information/most-unwanted/>
<https://agr.illinois.gov/insects/pests/spotted-lanternfly.html>
<https://cals.cornell.edu/new-york-state-integrated-pest-management/outreach-education/whats-bugging-you/spotted-lanternfly>

Fall webworm (minor)

It's about time to be seeing fall webworm (*Hyphantria cunea*). We don't have any reports of this pest yet, but they are often overlooked when they are small. So, it is time to be looking. Despite the name, this insect shows up more in mid to late summer. Caterpillars start to come out around GDD 1200, but the webbing typically is not produced until closer to GDD 1800, so the caterpillars may be eating for a few days before the telltale webbing shows up. (Dr. Fredric Miller reports that webbing has been seen in Southern Illinois.) This caterpillar is known to feed on more than 100 species of deciduous trees. Preferred hosts include hickory, ash, birch, black walnut, crabapple, elm, maple, oak, and pecan. The caterpillars are pale green to yellow (fig. 3) and covered with long hairs. There are two races, black-headed and red-headed. The black-headed webworms are supposed to appear



Figure 3 Fall webworm caterpillars

about a month earlier than the red-headed race. Full-grown caterpillars reach about one inch in length.

Fall webworms overwinter in the pupal stage in the ground, under loose bark, and in leaf litter. [Adult moths](#) appear from early to mid-summer, and females deposit eggs in masses on the underside of host leaves. In about one week, eggs hatch into caterpillars that begin to feed and then to spin a messy web (fig. 4) over the foliage on which they feed. The webs increase in size as caterpillars continue to feed. In about six weeks caterpillars will drop to the ground and pupate. Damage is cosmetic since this pest eats leaves late in the season after the leaves have finished their job of making food for the plant.



Figure 4 Web of fall webworm

Some people confuse fall webworm and eastern tent caterpillar. How can you tell the difference? Eastern tent caterpillars are spring caterpillars and form thick, neat tents in the angles of branches. Fall webworm caterpillars are active much later in the season and make a messy web at the ends of the branches. Eastern tent caterpillars go outside the tent to feed and return to the tent at night. Fall webworm caterpillars feed in the nest and expand the nest to enclose more leaves to feed on.

Management: Insecticides are not warranted. The unsightly webs can be pruned out of small trees. Since these caterpillars stay in the web while feeding, pruning the webs at any time of day will eliminate the caterpillars. Webworms also have many natural enemies including birds, predaceous bugs, and parasitic wasps.

Good website: <https://mortonarb.org/plant-and-protect/tree-plant-care/plant-care-resources/fall-webworm/>

Zimmerman pine moth (serious)

It is also time to start thinking about Zimmerman pine moth (*Dioryctria zimmermani*). Mid-August is the time we usually treat for this pest, but the GDD are moving along briskly and we may want to be prepared early this year. Larvae damage trees by tunneling just beneath the bark of the trunk and branches. The tunnels can girdle and weaken the trunk or branches so they are easily broken by wind or snow. Heavily infested trees are often deformed and are sometimes killed. Common hosts include Austrian, Scots, and ponderosa pines.

Larvae overwinter in cocoon-like structures under bark scales. They become active in the spring and tunnel into the bark and sometimes the terminals.

In late spring, they migrate to the base of branches, tunneling into the whorl area where pitch masses (fig. 5) exude from the wound site. The larvae continue to feed, pupate within the pitch mass, and emerge as adults in August. After mating, female moths lay eggs, often near wounds or previous pitch masses. Eggs hatch in about a week, and the larvae feed for only a brief time before preparing to overwinter.



Figure 5 Pitch masses caused by Zimmerman pine moth larvae

Management: Damaged wood should be pruned out as soon as dieback and pitch masses are seen. Larvae can be controlled by spraying bark of the trunk and main branches with insecticides around GDD 1900-2150 (this GDD derived from several universities, not “Coincide”).

Annual cicada (minor)

Have you noticed cicadas singing? No, you are not hearing things. It is time for the annual, or dog-day cicadas (*Neotibicen* species) to show up.

These are the insects that make a noise high in trees during the warm, dog-days of summer. This is the mating call of the male. The insect is about 1 ¾ inches long and green to brown with black markings (fig. 6). A distinguishing feature between the annual and periodic cicada is the eye color. The periodic cicada has red eyes and the annual has black.



Figure 6 Annual cicada

Periodical cicadas have orange veins in their wings, the annual does not. Another important difference is that the annual or dog-day cicadas emerge in much smaller numbers than the 17-year type. Many years, people don't even notice that the annual ones have emerged.

Like the periodical cicadas, females of the annual species lay eggs by sawing a slit in the bark of twigs and placing the eggs in the twig. Egg-laying injury can cause some minor twig dieback. After the eggs hatch, the young nymphs drop down into the ground to feed on plant roots. They have large front legs used for digging in the soil. They live on tree roots as nymphs for two to five years with some adults emerging in late summer every year. The feeding on the roots doesn't cause much damage.

Management: Control is not necessary since they cause minimal damage to trees. The population of the annual cicada is much smaller than what we experienced in 2024 with periodical or 17-year cicadas. Put the netting away and relax.

Pest Updates: Diseases

Oak wilt...or not?

Here comes that phrase no one wants to hear: “Your oak has oak wilt”. Or maybe you’ve been told that your elm has Dutch elm disease, or that your maple tree has verticillium wilt. That proclamation may have come from a neighbor, or an arborist, or a municipal employee. In any case, it is time to stop and think, not panic. No one can say with 100% certainty that your tree has any of these diseases. No one, except the diagnostic professional who can prove it by culturing it in a laboratory. Professionals who work in the field can say that they suspect a certain disease based on visible symptoms, but only the lab can confirm it.

There are several very serious diseases that really should be confirmed through laboratory testing. They include oak wilt, Dutch elm disease, Verticillium wilt, bacterial leaf scorch, bur oak blight and pine wilt nematode. Why is it important to be sure? Some of these diseases are very serious and can be fatal. Often, the only option is to cut the tree down. We want to verify the infection is there before we do that. In the case of Verticillium wilt, there is no way to save the tree, but if we can confirm Verticillium, we know that it will impact what we replant in that area. Verticillium wilt is a disease pathogen that actually lives in the soil and it could potentially infect a new tree.

Laboratory testing is available in each state, through the state lab. In Illinois, the state lab is the [University of Illinois Plant Clinic](#). If you live in another state, you can find your state lab through the [National Plant Diagnostic Network](#). Some arborist companies also have their own labs and can provide testing.

Bur oak blight (potentially serious)

We have not had any reports of bur oak blight (BOB) yet this year. We do want to keep our guard up and be on the lookout for bur oak blight. This disease is caused by the fungal pathogen *Tubakia iowensis*. There are other species of *Tubakia* that cause less serious fungal diseases. BOB infects bur oak (*Quercus macrocarpa*), and research by Iowa State shows that swamp white oak (*Quercus bicolor*) may be infected, although this is rare.



Figure 7 Vein discoloration due to bur oak blight

This is the time to be looking for symptoms. The first symptoms are purplish spots on the veins on the lower side of the leaves. The spots then spread and develop into purple coloration along the veins (fig. 7) on both the lower and upper side of the leaves. In August and September, symptoms will worsen, with veins dying and the infection moving to the end of the leaf, leading to a wedge-shaped dead area. While there may be some defoliation, some infected leaves will remain on the tree, and the fungal spores will overwinter in pustules located on the petioles (fig. 8) of these infected leaves. The main part of the leaf may fall, but the petiole often remains attached to the tree. The presence of these pustules is considered a requirement for the confirmation of BOB. New spores will be released in spring. Repeated years of defoliation may predispose the tree to other problems, such as Armillaria root rot and two-lined chestnut borer. Often, these secondary problems contribute to the death of a tree as much as BOB itself.



Figure 8 BOB pustules on petiole (arrow)

Management: First, confirm that the tree actually has bur oak blight. Get a sample tested at the University of Illinois Plant Clinic (<http://web.extension.illinois.edu/plantclinic/>). Keep trees vigorous through proper watering and pruning (during dormant season). Iowa State and University of Minnesota are indicating that injections of propiconazole in spring may be useful in slowing the disease. Injections must be done by a licensed professional. Over-application of propiconazole can lead to leaf drop. Raking fallen leaves does not help manage this disease because the petioles that remain on the tree are a source of infection.

Good websites:

<http://www.mortonarb.org/trees-plants/tree-and-plant-advice/help-diseases/bur-oak-blight>
<http://hyg.ipm.illinois.edu/article.php?id=752>

Pest Updates: Weeds

Helleborine (aggressive to potentially invasive)

When is an orchid a bad thing? When it is helleborine (*Epipactis helleborine*), a non-native orchid. The Plant Clinic at The Morton Arboretum has not yet received emails regarding this orchid turned weed, but it has been widely reported in the last few years. Why is it a weed? It spreads underground very aggressively via fleshy

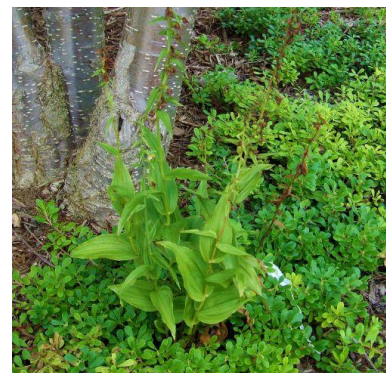


Figure 9 Helleborine (Rebecca Finneran, MSU)

A photograph of a single, upright stem of a plant, likely a species of orchid, set against a dark, textured background. The stem is green and bears several small, light purple flowers with yellow centers. The flowers are arranged in a loose, ascending cluster. Green, lanceolate bracts are visible along the stem. The overall appearance is that of a delicate, wildflower specimen.

Good website: <https://www.minnesotawildflowers.info/flower/helleborine>

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bark. These stems need to be cut out. Disinfect pruning tools between cuts to minimize spread of these diseases.

We can't control the weather, but we can give our trees and shrubs good care to help mitigate some of the effects of the weather. It is always a good idea to prune out dead wood and cankered branches. We do not recommend fertilizing these stressed plants. If the roots are compromised and not taking up water from the soil, they won't be able to take up nutrients either. Chemically, fertilizers are considered salts and may further damage stressed roots. Water is the best remedy for injured roots. We need to supply enough water to allow new roots to grow, but must be careful not to saturate the soil. Roots need water, but they also need air.

Herbicide damage

We have seen a number of plants this year with symptoms that could be attributed to herbicide (weed killer) damage. I use the term 'could be attributed to' because herbicide damage is difficult to prove. Some labs will test for herbicide residue, but testing can be expensive, unless you can narrow down which chemical you suspect. Other causes like cold damage and viruses can sometimes cause similar symptoms. We have seen a fair amount of cold damage this spring due to the hard freeze which occurred in early May.

Herbicides, like 2, 4-D and dicamba are commonly found in a number of products, especially those for broadleaf weed control in lawns. These herbicides are growth regulators, and damage from them often shows up as distorted growth. These chemicals have the potential to volatilize into the air and be carried on the wind to off-target species. This spring and early summer provided us with many windy days where this type of drift could occur. Also, very hot temperatures can increase volatilization. We have experienced some very hot days this summer. Herbicide labels often say to avoid using the product when the temperature exceeds a certain level to reduce damage to off-target plants. Luckily, most landscape plants will outgrow the damage from herbicide drift as long as they were not sprayed directly.

The bottom line is to read the label directions and follow them carefully. Another herbicide ingredient, dicamba can not only do damage if it volatilizes and drifts, it can also enter the root systems of trees and shrubs if the product is applied in the root zone. Products that contain dicamba have a special warning on the label regarding use around trees and shrubs. If you are using any herbicide, read the label carefully to see what active ingredient is in the product. Landscapers and lawn care workers should be aware of the possible dangers of dicamba and be checking to see if it is in the products they use. When hiring landscapers and lawn care companies to treat lawns, homeowners should ask what product they use and ask also which active ingredient(s) it contains.



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 Julia 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/>

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2026 Plant Health Care Report Index



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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.

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