

Plant Health Care Report

Scouting Report of The Morton Arboretum



THE
CHAMPION
of TREES

July 24, 2026

Issue 2026.9

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?

Panicked hydrangea (*Hydrangea paniculata*) is in full flower (fig. 1).

Accumulated Growing Degree Days (Base 50) at The Morton Arboretum: 1713 (as of July 22)

Insects/other pests

- Oak slug sawfly
- Aphids on native plants
- Milkweed beetle and milkweed bugs
- Magnolia scale, some important details

Diseases

- Septoria on dogwood

Miscellaneous

- Physiological yellowing on tulip tree
- Remontant flowers



Figure 1 Panicked hydrangea (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 7/23/2026	St. Charles reporting station (north)	Champaign reporting station (central)	Carbondale reporting station (south)
2-inch, bare soil	69.1	94.3	89.8
4-inch, bare soil	68.3	91.1	84.6
4-inch, under sod	75.7	83.6	80.3
8-inch, under sod	74.6	80	80.4

* 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	6.31 (as of 7/23)	6.11 (whole month)	3.98 (whole month)
Aug			
Sept			
Year to date	29.15 (thru 7/23)	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 1524 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 7/23/2026	GDD as of 7/24/2025	GDD as of 7/23/2020	GDD as of 7/23/2015
Carbondale, IL*	2696	2554	2182	2345
Champaign, IL*	2146	2127	1844	1654
Chicago Botanic Garden**	1736	No report	1597	1252
Glencoe*	1219	1186	1220	No report
Chicago O'Hare*	1864	1830	1690	1633
Kankakee, IL*	1920	1833	1713	1673
Lisle, IL*	1904	1878	1730	No report
The Morton Arboretum	1713 (7/22)	1643	1658.5	1409
Quincy, IL*	2328	2169	1936	2064
Rockford, IL*	1775	1706	1598	1396
Springfield, IL*	2306	2166	1907	2046
Waukegan, IL* (60087)	1593	1499	1461	1329
Waukegan, IL* (60085)	1689	1615	1523	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
1934	Spotted lanternfly	Adult emergence	Feeding on sap; honeydew in large quantities
1950	Magnolia scale	Crawlers <u>begin</u> to emerge	Feeding on sap

Oak slug sawfly (minor)

We have received scattered reports of oak slug sawfly (*Caliroa* species) larvae feeding on oak leaves. The sawflies feed on the lower layer of the leaf, leaving behind the upper epidermal layer and creating a 'window pane' effect (fig. 2). It is typical to see the larvae all lined up side by side while feeding (fig. 3). The larvae are about 1/8 inch-long, pale yellow-green, and slimy; they will reach about 1/2 inch when mature. There are two to three generations per year. Completely skeletonized oak leaves may drop prematurely. Common hosts include bur oak, white oak and swamp white oak. Damage is generally an aesthetic problem.



Figure 2 Oak slug sawfly damage

Management: This pest is kept in check by parasites, microbial disease, and other natural enemies. Even noticeable outbreaks are generally not dangerous to the health of the host oaks.

Good website: <https://bygl.osu.edu/node/1980>

Aphids on native plants (minor)

This growing season, we have seen various species of aphids (green ones, black ones, pink ones, even woolly ones). Now as we get into summer, we are starting to see populations of aphids on some of our native plants like common milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*) and cup plant (*Silphium perfoliatum*). The species we are seeing on our native plants are the yellow and red species. The yellow ones (*Aphis nerii*) are called oleander aphids (fig. 4) or milkweed aphids. The red ones (fig. 5) are most likely a species of *Uroleucon*, which feed on members of the Aster family (to which many of our late season natives belong). They are all tear-drop shaped and have two cornicles on the back end (looks like twin tail-pipes). Aphids are small, about 1/16".



Figure 3 Oak slug sawfly larvae (photo : Deb Link)

These insects suck out sap from the leaves, and in many cases, stems. The feeding can lead to curled or distorted leaves (but it does not do so in every case). Aphids also produce honeydew, which is a sticky substance. Sticky leaves are often noticed before the insects themselves. Aphid damage is generally fairly minor, but they can spread viruses.

Management: Aphids are relatively easy to manage. They tend to feed in groups. Clipping off parts of the plant that are heavily infested can get rid of the whole population quickly. Spraying the plant with a strong stream of water from the garden hose may also dislodge much of the population. I have done this myself and found it to be a very effective and satisfying process. There are also natural predators, like lady bugs, that will feed on aphids, so avoid insecticides and let the good insects do their job. The Plant Clinic at the Morton Arboretum has received photos of ladybugs in the pupal stage, ready to become adults. So, help is on the way!

Good websites:

<http://www.mortonarb.org/trees-plants/tree-and-plant-advice/help-pests/aphids>

Milkweed beetle and milkweed bug (minor)

Milkweed has become a popular plant to grow in home gardens, as well as in native areas. Many people are hoping to attract monarch butterflies. Sometimes, uninvited guests show up too. A couple of these will be out soon, if they are not already. I am talking about milkweed bugs and milkweed beetles.

Red milkweed beetles (*Tetraopes tetrophthalmus*) are 1/2 to 3/4 inch -long and rosy red with black spots and long black antennae (fig. 6). Adults feed on milkweed leaves; while in the larval stage, this insect bores into and feeds on milkweed stems and roots.

Milkweed bugs also attack milkweed. There are two species of milkweed bug, the large milkweed bug (*Oncopeltus fasciatus*) and the small milkweed bug (*Lygaeus kalmii*). These two insects look very much alike, both sporting bright orange-red and black colors (fig. 7). Young bugs (nymphs) also have these colors, but lack fully developed wings. Both the adults and the nymphs will feed on the milkweed seeds, and it is not uncommon to see groups of them huddled together on the milkweed fruits. These insects are often mistaken for boxelder bugs which are similar in color.

Management: None usually needed as relatively little damage is done.



Figure 4 Yellow aphids on milkweed stem



Figure 5 Red aphids



Figure 6 Red milkweed beetle

Good websites: <http://bugguide.net/node/view/504>
<http://bugguide.net/node/view/460>
<https://bugguide.net/node/view/2966>



Figure 7 Milkweed bugs (adults and nymphs)

Magnolia scale, some important details

The battle against magnolia scale has been a fierce one for the last few years. Now, we are coming to that time of year when the crawlers, the youngsters, are born. This is the time when we can turn the tide and win the battle. Sometimes, we miss this opportunity because we don't have a good handle on the life cycle of this pest. Let's clear up some of the confusion and win the battle this year.

This insect has an odd life cycle and we need to understand it. As fall and winter approach, many insects go into a very protected overwintering stage like an egg or a pupa. Not so with the magnolia scale. She gives birth to her babies in late summer and they will overwinter on the stems as half-grown nymphs. She is literally turning her children out into the cold.

How does this information help us? Right now, most people with a magnolia tree are focused on the adults because they are so visible. These adults will give birth to their babies and will be dead by the end of the season. They may hang on to the tree for some time after they die, but they will be dead. So, we can stop thinking about them. At this time of year, let's focus on the newborn crawlers; the defenseless newborn crawlers.

The crawlers should start emerging around GDD 1950. Then they are going to be moving around and growing for the next couple of months (maybe longer, depending on how the weather goes). That gives us time to kill them before winter. After winter, any of the crawlers that did not killed by us, or the winter, will become active again and will still be moving around in spring, giving us another chance to kill the ones we missed in fall. This is where we can win the battle!! Remember that the babies being born very soon will be the adults you see next summer. If we can kill them now, there will be few to no adults next summer.

Because the crawlers are exposed in late summer and fall, we can spray them with insecticidal soap, with a horticultural oil or with an insecticide. Insecticidal soap and horticultural oil both must come in direct contact with the crawlers to kill them. Horticultural oil is also sold as summer oil and multi-season oil.

Act at the appropriate time and you can win the battle against magnolia scale.

Pest Updates: Diseases

***Septoria* leaf spot on dogwood (minor)**

Every year, about this time, *Septoria* leaf spot shows up on dogwood shrubs. The spots are present only on leaves. They have purple brown margins with pale centers (fig. 8), about 1/8 of an inch in diameter, and limited by veins. The spots get larger and more numerous as the growing season progresses, but the disease is actually of little consequence to the plant.



Figure 8 *Septoria* leaf spot

Management: Sanitary measures, such as collecting and discarding infected leaves as soon as they become apparent, should help reduce spread to new leaves and plants

Miscellaneous

Physiological yellowing of tulip tree

Physiological yellowing of tulip tree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) is a problem related to the dry weather and heat. We often see this problem start up in July. This year it is showing up quite a bit due to the recent extreme heat. Even though we have had a lot of rain this season, we have also had a couple of bouts of extreme heat and that heat can dry out soils very quickly. Tulip tree does not like dry soils and the tree will react with completely yellow leaves scattered throughout the crown of the tree. They will soon fall off the tree. Some leaves may also show small necrotic (dead) spots, but they are not serious (fig. 9). This often occurs on river birch as well.



Figure 9 Tulip tree with physiological yellowing and necrotic spots

Management: This type of leaf yellowing indicates that the tree needs water. Watering is important to reduce the overall stress on the tree. [Water](#) thoroughly.

Good websites: <https://ag.purdue.edu/departments/btny/ppdl/potw-dept-folder/2022/tulip-leaf-drop.html>
<https://bygl.osu.edu/node/449>

Remontant flowering

Now for something pretty. This time of year, you may notice some of the magnolia trees putting out a few flowers (fig. 10). Since magnolias are spring-flowering trees, what's going on? Actually, it is not unusual for

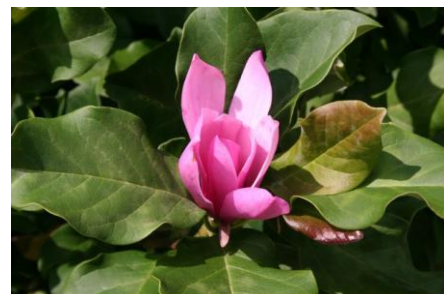


Figure 10 Ann magnolia flowering in mid-summer

magnolias to do this. Sometimes a few flowers on magnolias get tricked into blooming at the wrong time (we call this remountant flowering). Some magnolias do it every year. Since only a few flowers on each tree are blooming, the remaining flower buds will remain dormant and should bloom at the normal time next spring. While this can be common with certain magnolias, other trees and shrubs also do it from time to time. With our strange weather, we may see it more often than we have in the past.



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 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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