

Plant Health Care Report

Scouting Report of The Morton Arboretum



THE
CHAMPION
of TREES

Aug 7, 2026

Issue 2026.10

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?

Rose of Sharon (*Hibiscus syriacus*) is in flower (fig. 1).

Accumulated Growing Degree Days (Base 50) at The Morton Arboretum: 2036 (as of Aug 6)

Insects/other pests

- Viburnum leaf beetle update
- Spotted lanternfly update
- Grubs in the lawn

Diseases

- 'Melting out' on lawns
- Mushrooms on trees mean wood rot

Miscellaneous

- Goldenrod is a good guy



Figure 1 Rose of Sharon (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 8/6/2026	St. Charles reporting station (north)	Champaign reporting station (central)	Carbondale reporting station (south)
2-inch, bare soil	86.3	81.6	83.1
4-inch, bare soil	83.1	82.8	80.3
4-inch, under sod	77.1	82.3	78.9
8-inch, under sod	75	79.6	79.2

* 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	8.31	6.11	3.98
Aug	3.79 (as of 8/6)	6.01 (whole month)	3.78 (whole month)
Sept			
Year to date	34.94 (thru 8/6)	28.93 (thru Aug)	26.04 (thru Aug)

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

The historical average (1937-2025) for this date at The Morton Arboretum is 1857 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 8/6/2026	GDD as of 8/6/2025	GDD as of 8/6/2020	GDD as of 8/6/2015
Carbondale, IL*	3066	2961	2541	2759
Champaign, IL*	2462	2486	2151	2320
Chicago Botanic Garden**	2070	No report	1947	1616
Glencoe*	1517	1511	1539	No report
Chicago O'Hare*	2185	2187	2013	2012
Kankakee, IL*	2227	2162	2003	2018
Lisle, IL*	2227	2233	2054	No report
The Morton Arboretum	2036	1992	1966.5	1738
Quincy, IL*	2694	2521	2266	1655.5
Rockford, IL*	2089	2025	1894	1719
Springfield, IL*	2649	2524	2220	2426
Waukegan, IL* (60087)	1898	1818	1763	1674
Waukegan, IL* (60085)	1998	1947	1834	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

Viburnum leaf beetle update (serious)

Viburnum leaf beetle egg-laying sites are already showing up on twigs. The eggs will hatch into larvae next spring. Viburnum leaf beetles lay their eggs in the tips of viburnum twigs (usually on the underside of the twig). If we clip those twig tips off in fall and winter and destroy them, we can minimize populations for next spring. The egg-laying damage usually occurs in rows. The eggs are laid in holes chewed by the adult. The holes are then covered by a cap of chewed bark. These caps are fairly easy to see as they are a different color than the stem (fig. 2), but they will be SMALL since they are out at the very tips of the stems.



Figure 2 Viburnum leaf beetle egg-laying sites

While the thought of cutting out egg-infested twigs may not be appealing, getting rid of an insect at the egg stage can be a very effective management tool. The fewer that hatch, the fewer we have to try to kill next spring. That means we can use less insecticide, and that is a good thing for the environment. Ultimately, it also means less damage to our viburnums. You might say “But I have 20 arrowwood viburnums on my property!” Food for thought: we should probably stop planting 20 of anything. With all the pests on the horizon, it pays to diversify as we install new plants. Even with a number of shrubs, we can still reduce the population for next season. The eggs are there during fall and winter. That gives us about 7 months to find and destroy those twigs. This does work!

Spotted lanternfly update

In [issue 8](#), we published an article about spotted lanternfly. Just a reminder: Now is the time to be vigilant in looking for this insect and reporting it if you find it. At this time, late stage instars are present and possibly adults as well (fig. 3). **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.**

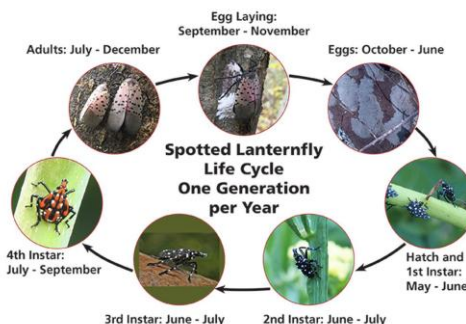


Figure 3 Illustration by Cornell CALS

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>

Grubs in the lawn (potentially serious)

We are getting to the time of year when homeowners start thinking about grubs (whether or not that actually have them). It is worthwhile to review the problem as it seems like there is always some wrong information floating around out there. White grubs are the larvae of several beetles including Japanese beetles, masked chafers and June beetles. While eggs of these species will hatch into grubs at various times in late summer, most of the damage begins around early August. The grubs will continue to feed on turf roots until the weather gets cold. Then they will go deeper into the soil to spend the winter. When spring returns, the grubs will come back to the surface, but they are older and tougher and insecticides are less successful.

How do you know if your lawn needs grub control? Grubs eat grass roots, and this will lead to brown areas in the lawn. Unfortunately, other causes can lead to a brown lawn. We have had a lot of hot, dry weather, and that can cause lawns to turn brown. We are also seeing some fungal diseases in lawns that can lead to browning (see article below). If your lawn has grubs, you will be able to pull the lawn up like a carpet since the roots are gone. Homeowners who are irrigating the lawn should be watchful. The beetles have to bury their eggs in the soil. They are more likely to do this in soils that are moist and easy to dig. So, those of you who are watering may be more likely to deal with grubs this year.

Is grub control a good idea for everyone? Not necessarily. If your lawn has never had grubs before and you are not irrigating, it would be best to skip the grub control. Usually, control is not warranted unless 10-12 grubs are present per square foot. Also, we have had fewer reports of Japanese beetles this year, so the grub population from that species may be down.

If you plan to manage grubs with insecticides, know that the timing of application depends on the product selected. There are now many insecticides available to treat grubs, and they have different application times. Traditional insecticides, like trichlorfon and carbaryl, are applied to the lawn when young grubs are active (August and September). Imidacloprid can be applied once in mid-July in areas where adult beetles were numerous. Another product, known as chlorantraniliprole, is applied in spring, but targets new grubs that hatch out in late July. It will not kill grubs present in spring. Usually, one treatment of any of these is adequate when followed up with good turf management. (Insecticide information from University of Illinois and Michigan State University). The bottom line is to read the product label carefully to see which ingredient the product contains and exactly when it should be used. Timing is important.

Most of these products need to be watered in to be effective. Check the label for this information as well.

We receive a lot of questions about the use of the biological control milky spore disease. This is a bacterium that is specifically toxic to the grub stage of the Japanese beetle and is applied to the soil. This is a slow method at best in the warmer southern states (may take 3-5 years to build up in soil enough to be effective) and is often not very effective in colder, northern states. Also, if you have grubs that come from another type of beetle, it won't work on them at all.

There are also products that contain *Bacillus thuringiensis* var. *galleriae*, a naturally occurring bacterium. [Clemson](#) Cooperative Extension indicates that "research has shown control to be marginal".

Good website:

https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/how_to_choose_and_when_to_apply_grub_control_products_for_your_lawn

Pest Updates: Diseases

'Melting out' on lawns (serious)

The Plant Clinic at the Morton Arboretum gets a lot of reports of grub damage. Many of them are not actually grub damage. They are actually a fungal disease that has had many names over the years, the easiest of which is simply 'melting out'. This is a good name because the lawn develops brown patches where the grass just seems to be collapsing. This is very different from grub damage. Grubs eat the roots and you can often just pull the brown area up like a rug. With melting out, if you try that, you just end up with handfuls of dead grass blades.

Melting out is a tricky disease. The infection actually occurs in spring when the weather is wet, but the symptoms often don't show up until summer when the weather gets hotter and dryer. At that time the grass starts to collapse leaving brown areas in the lawn. These areas can enlarge and merge, doing quite a bit of damage to the lawn.

Management: Management of this disease requires a multi-pronged approach. Dead grass needs to be raked up completely. This gets rid of the infected plant tissue and readies the soil for re-seeding or re-sodding. Sod can be laid in summer, but proper watering will be needed to help the sod establish. Re-seeding a lawn can be done in very early fall or in spring.

There are some non-chemical management techniques that can help prevent a recurrence next spring. Avoid excess use of nitrogen fertilizer as this can make the disease worse. Excess nitrogen can cause grass to grow rapidly and fungal spores can get into soft, new tissues very

readily. Avoid watering late in the day, so the lawn can dry off before night. The longer a lawn stays wet, the more it is susceptible to infection. Mow the lawn at the proper height to avoid scalping the lawn. Mowing too low can stress the lawn and make it more open to infection.

Next spring, use of a fungicide may help prevent a new infection, especially if the spring is wet again. Couple the use of the fungicide with the non-chemical measures listed above. Fungicides alone are not enough.

Good website: <https://extension.psu.edu/turfgrass-diseases-leaf-spot-and-melting-out-diseases-causal-fungi-bipolaris-and-drechslera-spp>

Mushrooms on trees means wood rot (serious)

With the heavy rains we have been getting lately, you may have noticed some mushrooms popping up in the mulch in your flower beds. That just means that the mulch is decomposing as it is supposed to. Not a problem. But remember that ‘decomposing’ is another way to say ‘rotting’. So, when we see mushrooms growing out of a tree trunk or at the base of a tree, they are indicating there is some rot in the tree and this is a serious issue. The mushrooms produced by wood and root rot organisms can take on a lot of different appearances. Sometimes it will be a group of mushrooms growing at the base of the trunk or out of the root system. We may see a typical-looking mushroom (fig. 4) growing out of the trunk of the tree or a shelf-like structure referred to as a shelf fungus or conk (fig. 5). These all tend to look fairly minor, but we should pay close attention.

Any mushroom-like structure growing out of a tree is a sign that there is decay inside the tree. We often refer to this under the general term ‘wood rot’. The mushroom growing out of the trunk or stems is the tip of the ice berg. With wood rot, there is a fungal organism inside the wood causing it to decay. This decay process may continue, undetected, for years. At some point, in the life cycle of the fungal organism causing the decay, the reproductive structure (the mushroom) is produced and can be seen on the outside of the tree.



Figure 4 Mushrooms growing out of a tree trunk (photo: Sharon Yiesla)



Figure 5 Shelf fungus or conk growing out of base of tree (Photo: Sharon Yiesla)

Even though these appear minor, and many people just knock them off when they see them, we really should pay attention to this sign and call in a professional, certified arborist to examine the tree. When the wood inside a tree decays, that tree starts to lose stability. It may be one branch that is rotting and we can easily remedy that by removing that branch. If the rot is inside the main trunk, the whole tree may need to be removed. All wood rot fungi are not equal in their severity, but any fungal structure growing on a tree should be taken seriously. Trees with rot inside may still leaf out fully and look great. The wood rot is often in the heartwood of the tree. Water is moved up through the sapwood, and when that wood is undamaged, the tree gets the water it needs and will still leaf out even if the core is rotting. To find a certified arborist, go to illinoisarborist.org or treesaregood.org.

Good reference: [Wood Decay Fungi by Christopher J. Luley \(book\)](#)

Miscellaneous

Goldenrod is a good guy

We often get comments of concern about goldenrod (*Solidago* and *Oligoneuron* species). Those concerns include health issues and ‘invasiveness’. One of the big concerns is hay fever during fall flowering. Goldenrod does not cause hay fever. Ragweed is the real culprit in this case. It has green flowers that go unnoticed. Ragweed is wind-pollinated, so the pollen is blowing on the wind and is finding its way to allergy sufferers. Goldenrod has heavier pollen that is moved by insects. Some people express concern about touching goldenrod, and I suspect that this is just misinformation that has grown out of the hay fever myth.



Figure 6 Goldenrod in flower

The other big concern is ‘invasiveness’. The term invasive indicates that the plant is doing some harm to other organisms or habitats. The goldenrods are native plants and don’t have this kind of impact on other plants or habitats. Some goldenrods are spreaders and can grow more aggressively than is wanted in a residential garden. So, when including goldenrod in a landscape, choose species that are clumpers, not spreaders.

Goldenrod is not guilty of any of the things of which it stands accused. In fact, goldenrod is a really good guy in terms of pollinators. Goldenrod flowers (fig. 6) late in the season when there are fewer plants in flower, so it is beneficial to pollinators as a late season meal. Some plants have flowers that are visited by a few pollinators. Goldenrod has a very open-door policy and serves a wide range of pollinators, including several species of bees, wasps, beetles, flies, butterflies and moths. After the pollinators are gone and the seeds are produced, there are

some birds that will stop by for a snack as well. So, the party at goldenrod's house just keeps going well into autumn. This is definitely a group of plants that deserves more respect.



[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 Baker, 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 .

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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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