INSIDE GRUNDY COUNTY
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Hortline Can Provide Answers to Your Lawn and Garden Questions

Today's column contains excerpts from an article prepared by Richard Jauron, ISU Extension Horticulturalist. The following information was provided in response to questions received by ISU Extension's Hortline
(515-294-3108).

My crabapple has begun to drop some of its leaves. Why? The leaf drop is probably due to apple scab. Apple scab is a fungal disease. Cool, wet weather in spring favors apple scab development. Crabapple varieties differ in their susceptibility to apple scab. Some varieties are very susceptible to the disease, while others are resistant to apple scab.

Apple scab appears as velvety, olive-green to black spots on the crabapple leaves. Heavily infected leaves turn yellow and fall from the tree. Highly susceptible crabapple varieties may lose a large percentage of their leaves by mid-summer. Fortunately, apple scab does not kill affected trees. The damage is mainly aesthetic.

Apple scab can be prevented by applying fungicides from bud break through mid-June. For most home gardeners, however, controlling apple scab with fungicides is not practical. Sanitation also plays a role in controlling apple scab. Raking and destroying the leaves as soon as they fall should help reduce the severity of the infection next season. However, the best way to prevent apple scab is to plant scab-resistant crabapple varieties.

Why are the leaves on my pin oak yellow-green? In Iowa, the foliage of the pin oak often turns a sickly yellow-green. The yellow-green foliage is due to a deficiency of iron. The problem is referred to as iron chlorosis. (A close examination of chlorotic leaves will show that while most of the leaf is yellow-green, the tissue around the major veins is a darker green.) Most soils in Iowa contain sufficient amounts of iron. However, in alkaline soils (those with a pH above 7.0), the pin oak is unable to absorb adequate amounts of iron because much of it is in an insoluble form. Since many soils in Iowa are alkaline, chlorotic pin oaks are common in Iowa. Wet soil conditions make absorption of iron even more difficult.

Correcting an iron chlorosis problem is difficult. One strategy that sometimes works is to have an arborist or other tree care professional inject an iron containing compound directly into the trunks of chlorotic pin oak trees. The effects of a trunk injection may last three or four years.

Why is my sycamore tree dropping its leaves? The leaf drop is likely due to anthracnose. Anthracnose is a common fungal disease of sycamore, ash, maple, oak and other trees. Anthracnose is most severe in years with cool, wet spring weather. While anthracnose may cause extensive defoliation, it does not cause serious harm to healthy, well-established trees. Symptoms of anthracnose on sycamores include brown blotches on the leaves, death of young buds and shoots and leaf drop. In cool, wet springs, affected sycamores may lose most of their initial foliage. Fortunately, the sycamore trees will continue to produce additional leaves and shoots through
early summer. Since anthracnose does not cause serious harm to sycamores, fungicide treatments are rarely warranted.

For more information, contact the Grundy office of ISU Extension at 319-824-6979.