Stopping New Gall in Oak Trees

Many of us enjoy the presence of large stately oaks on our properties that shade our roofs, cast their cool presence over our warm season outside activities and add both value and ambiance to our living spaces and experiences. However, many of us also have observed the less-welcome presence in those same trees of an unattractive and vitality-diminishing nodule on the twigs that we have come to know as gouty gall.

Gall is the tree's response to the presence of an alien insect egg in the new soft tissue. And as we have also learned, it has been neither fast nor easy to eliminate. Some assistance has been provided by fertilization and appropriate nutritional care, but improvement does not come overnight. Other more direct remedies have often been less than successful and, very often, available only in the company of serious and even dangerous downsides.

Now at last there appears to be a new product that has proven in tests to be effective in stopping new generations of gouty gall. This product is a versatile soil-drench applied systemic insecticide with season-long residual effect. It's trade-name is Merit and it can be administered for gall eradication in a heavy dilution of water at the root collar. Merit (Imidicloprid) has shown itself to be an effective antidote, via various delivery systems, for a wide range of insect problems. In tests over the last dozen years it has shown remarkable effect in dramatically reducing gall proliferation and population in oaks.

If you are one of those who has been aware of these systemically disruptive and unsightly "tumors" on your trees, call me for more information.

Gouty Gall on an oak twig diminishes vascular flow.

Micro-Injection For Insect and Disease Control

For years and maybe even for a couple of generations, the standard answer for dealing with insect or disease situations in and on ornamental trees has been foliar spray treatments. Sometimes this has been and still is the best response to a particular infestation or pathogenic presence in or on the plant(s).

However, there is another way that is very often *the preferred approach* because it provides benefits that spraying does not, and *can* not. One benefit of micro-injection is active ingredient distribution through the plant. Whereas spray treatments depend largely upon applicator technique, correct formulation, and weather cooperation, micro-injectable products, whether they be insecticides, fungicides, or antibiotics, are pre-dosed, weather-proof, and delivered internally by the tree's own vascular (cambial) system.

"Just as with pizza, delivery is half the ballgame. "

A second major benefit of micro-injection is safety and liability issues. This is particularly relevant in the litigious society in which we all live today. With aerial spray application, there is always the concern of keeping the spray pattern directed on target without "wind drift" across the fence and into the neighbor's swimming pool – or onto his out-of-sight pets, property and children.

Just as with pizza, delivery is half the ballgame. Next time you detect a plant problem or issue, ask how injectables might play a role in the answer. In certain situations, they ARE the best answer.

A New Twist on Fertilization?
Why do I want a soil test?

Most of us have learned, sometimes the hard way, that *"even though a little bit is good, more is not always better."* And maybe we've also heard another maxim about "*a better mousetrap."* So how do these two fit and also apply to fertilizing and tree fertilization?

Trees (most plants) use mineral catalyzers in different ways, for different purposes, in different amounts and at different times of the year. And that leads directly to one simple two-part conclusion: 1) Don't expect to fertilized successfully without a soil test to see just **what and how much** is needed (as well as gain insight into the soil's pH, its organic content, and ability to hold nutrient). Then, (2) apply the appropriate minerals in reasonably close synchronization with the plant's seasonal clock. When all the pieces are put together right, it can make a big difference.

To say that we "feed our trees" is a bit of a misstatement. Unlike you and I, who take in our pizza from outside, plants make their own food (sugar-starch-carbohydrate) through the photosynthetic process. The mineral elements that we add in fertilization are only the keys that unlock the various doors in a miraculously complex process.