



CEDAR RIVER GARDEN CENTER

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Weekly Special: July 20th-July 26th

30% off:

*** Lilac, Cypress, and Crabapple**

*** All Lilies and Phlox**

*** Any yard or gift item with blue on it**



Squash Flower Woes

An interesting call came in regarding Squash flowers simply falling off the plant and not producing.

Upon research Cindy, our veggie queen, and I found a few reasons. Cindy's inclination was lack of pollination, and she is correct.

According to Gardening Guide's article published in 2017, squash and other cucurbits have separate male and female blossoms. Female blossoms develop later, are

farther out on the vine and have a small, undeveloped fruit at the base of the flower. Only female flowers can yield fruit; and in order for the fruit to develop rather than simply drop off, the flower must be successfully pollinated.

If you saw Cindy on the news earlier this year, you may recall she suggested to always plant flowers along with your vegetables. Why? The flowers bring in the pollinators. Pollinators are necessary for the production of MANY fruits and vegetables.

We also always warn about just outright spraying your plants with insecticides for this season. If you are spraying blooms on another plant, then you may be killing off the very bugs and insects we need to pollinate our gardens.

If you do not see pollinating insects, you may need to hand pollinate your crops. Female flowers that are not pollinated will drop along with their tiny fruit. You will need to take a small paintbrush and rub it inside the male flowers and then rub the inside of the female flower.

Other reasons for lack of production on your squash? Temperature and moisture. Excessive heat and moisture can turn production of many fruits off. Tomatoes and squash are notorious for low production during summers with temperature regularly in the high 80s and low 90s.

Sad Spruce

Discoloration on evergreen trees can be challenging to diagnose. Sometimes the browning starts from the inside out and others outside in. Then you can have bottom to the top or from the top down.

I will outline a few disease and pest issues over the next few weeks. We will first start with the most common disease issue for Blue Spruce and the incredibly challenging battle to managing mites.

Needle Cast:

We do not carry large Blue Spruce for windbreaks for a reason. For many years now Blue Spruce in our area have been on the decline. The once blue needles begin to display a purplish tone prior to falling off the branch all together. The fallen needles are typically last year's growth. Current seasons growth often stays on the tree to be finished off the following year, creating this ring of "healthy" looking growth. This damage typically starts at the bottom of the tree working its way to the top through splashing water.

Once you have seen signs of Needle Cast, it can be held at bay on smaller trees and

in smaller areas by your own spraying. If the disease has expanded beyond your area of reach, the tree will need to be professionally treated.

Control:

Fungicides with the active ingredient chlorothalonil, copper hydroxide or mancozeb will protect new spruce needles from infection by *Rhizosphaera*.

Two properly-timed applications per year for at least two consecutive years, and sometimes three years, is required for control. The timing of the two applications is the same for the second and third year.



Image: Michigan State Extension

Managing Mites:

We have seen multiple examples of Mite damage on Arborvitae in the area. One of our own evergreens planted in the berm included. Damage appears as tiny yellow stipples on needles. The needles turn yellow, and then brown. On a Spruce tree, the damage is usually first observed on the older needles at the base of the tree, eventually moving up. When the mite population is very high, webbing may be noticed on the needles.

This spider mites prefer cooler temperatures and are active in the spring. The damage becomes visible during the hot summer months.

Control:

Mites are incredibly hard to diagnose. They are so small that often a jewelers loop or magnifying glass may be necessary to spot these destructive pests.

You will need to take a sheet of white paper and tap the branches of the tree on to the paper. Then check the sheet of paper for tiny moving specks of "dust" those "dust" particles are actually mites.

Neem Oil and Dormant Oil are both suggested to control mites. Dormant Oil should not be used on Arborvitae, Junipers, or Blue Spruce to name a few. Neem Oil can be used on the on evergreens. Both oils will need to be re-applied and please watch temperature sensitivity.

Labels should be read and directions followed prior to application of any chemical.



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