

# Heads UP!

## Welcome

...to the May 2015 edition of:

### Heads UP!

a publication of the Diagnostic Lab of the King County Master Gardeners. The Diagnostic Lab operates year-round at CUH with an increased presence during the summer growing season.

Last year there were 418 plant samples sent to the King County Master Gardener Diagnostic Lab. We know that you, on the front-line clinics, have seen and diagnosed thousands more. It is our desire to pass on even more information to you so you can better help your clients this year. So here's the inaugural edition of a bimonthly newsletter we call "**Heads Up**". We hope it will provide some insight on the upcoming two-month period in your clinics by looking back at our diagnostic history of those months. All of this data has been taken from our own, ever-expanding Diagnostic Lab database. Knowing the past is one of the best ways of predicting the future when it comes to local plant problems. We plan to select key plants and diagnoses which we hope will give you a "Heads Up" on what you might expect to see in your clinics in the next two months.

Last year, in April we saw only 22 samples in the Diagnostic lab. While that is a small number it more than doubles the number of samples we saw in April 2013. With the warmer weather this year will we see even more? Of the samples we have seen in April over the years, most of the problems have been cultural in nature with a smattering of fungal attacks and insect culprits.

We will use the following conventions to indicate the type of diagnosis: C = cultural, F = fungal, I = insect, B = bacterial and V = viral.

In April you might expect to see:

- Rhododendrons with myriad C problems and leaf spots (F)
- Camellia with sun scald (C) and flower blight (F)
- Maples (*Acer* spp) with all sorts of C problems as well as verticillium wilt (F)
- Fatsia japonica with sooty mold (F) and psyllids (I)
- Hinoki cypress with cottony scale (I)

Cryptomeria and clematis with winter damage (C)  
Kiwi with pseudomonas (B)  
Raspberry with (C) problems and sowbugs (I)  
Pines and other conifers with needle cast (F)  
Also expect lichen . . . a benign cultural condition but worrisome to many clients (C).

So brush up on these common plants so you can diagnose their potential problems in April should they appear at your clinic.

Now on to May. Last May we saw 65 samples, which triples the number of plant submissions for April. In comparison, in May 2013 we had 57 samples and only 50 in May of 2012. This may indicate that people are getting savvier about getting out in the garden earlier and checking for damage. Or it may indicate a warming trend for our environment. Or it may signify nothing. . .

The key plants and their associated problems to look for in May are:

- Rhododendrons and azaleas - these lovelies are the largest number of submissions to the Diagnostic lab in past Mays. Look for leaf spot (F), powdery mildew (F), flower/foliage blight (F), leaf necrosis (C) and the ever-present bane of rhodies and azaleas, the lace bug (I).
- Following closely behind the rhodies is the Prunus family of cherry, plum and peach. For cherries the most common problem is brown rot (F) but expect to see cherries with cultural damage (C) and aphids (I). Peaches typically present with peach leaf curl (F). Pears will show signs of scab (F), leaf curling midges and codling moth (both I).
- Running a close third you will see maples with problems - usually Japanese maples (*Acer palmatum*). Expect anthracnose, verticillium wilt and necrotic cankers (all F).
- Apples and crabapples will have their number one early season nemesis: scab (F) as well as scale and leaf hoppers (both I).
- In the conifer category you may see arborvitae with cankers (F), tip moth damage and scale (both I). Cypress may show tip blight (F). Pines may have needle cast (F) and spruces suffer from aphids (I).
- Roses get black spot and botrytis (F).
- Strawberry tree (*Arbutus unedo*) emerge from the winter cold with leaf spot (F) and cultural issues, often lichen.
- Laurels have many problems including physiological shot hole (C), cutworms (I) and leaf spot (F).
- We often see Dogwoods (*Cornus florida* and *C. nuttallii*, but not *C. kousa*) with their nightmare: anthracnose (F).
- You may encounter weevils (I) on hydrangea and just about anything else.
- Hellebores may present viruses (V).
- If you see tomatoes, most likely they were planted too early (C) and may or may not survive into the heat of summer.

The lesson we should learn from April and May is that a diagnosis of “cultural” can mean anything from too much or not enough water to not enough sun and please stop walking on my roots. Cultural problems lead to stressed and unhealthy plants that are more susceptible to F, I, B or V problems. Further lessons include: Roses get black spot, rhodies suffer from lace bugs, cherries can be susceptible to brown rot, apples get scab and non-kousa dogwoods can suffer from antracnose. These lessons can be topics of study for all of us.

We endeavor to email our diagnostic responses to our clients and clinic CICs whenever possible. Email enables us to process samples and respond with a diagnosis as quickly and inexpensively as possible. Since beginning this new approach in 2014 we have saved over \$85 in postage alone. We can only do this if the client’s email address is clearly written on the submission form. In addition, in compiling our “ever-expanding Diagnostic lab database”, we try to relate clinic areas (e.g., the Eastside, south Seattle, north of the ship canal, etc.) to plant problems so that we might better isolate King County micro-environments and pockets of certain plant problems. Please assist us by making sure your clinic name is on the submission form as well as a clearly written email address for your client. Our hope is that this treasure of information will make all of us more informed and knowledgeable Master Gardeners.

Well, that’s it for our first edition of “**Heads Up**”. We hope that it arms you with useful information to use in your clinic for April and May. Let us know what you think and what else might be useful in upcoming editions.

King County Master Gardener Diagnostic Lab  
[Diagnostic.clinic@WSU.edu](mailto:Diagnostic.clinic@WSU.edu)  
(206) 221-2537

