UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND EXTENSION | AgFS Agriculture & Food Systems

University of Maryland Extension Landscape and Nursery IPM Reports in 2025

In 2025, the University of Maryland Extension Green Industries IPM Team will continue what Stanton Gill started over 25 years ago. We are committed to providing the commercial ornamental industry timely information on a weekly basis on what is going on in landscapes, nurseries, and turf areas.

We will start the weekly Landscape and Nursery IPM reports on March 28. We will send out special alerts before the regular reports start if necessary.

Continue to send images and questions about plant problems and other observations

As many of you know, Stanton Gill was the coordinator of these reports. Many of you sent him emails with images and called him with questions about pest problems. We were able to include this information in the IPM reports to help everyone scout for and manage these problems. It is what makes the IPM reports so successful. This year, **we still need your support. Please continue letting us know what you are seeing in landscapes, nurseries, and turf areas.** With the changes we are making, sending your pest observations and reports earlier in the week will be very helpful.

The IPM Report Team (Where to send images and questions)

Dr. Paula Shrewsbury (pshrewsbury@umd.edu), UMD/UME Entomologist, will be responding to insect questions.

The new director of the UMD Plant Diagnostic Lab, Dr. Ana Cristina Fulladolsa (acfulla@umd.edu) and Dr. David Clement (clement@umd.edu), Plant Pathologist at CMREC-Ellicott City, will be able to respond to plant disease questions. Please go to the UMD Plant Diagnostic Lab website for how to submit plant samples suspected of having disease or plant problems in general.

Dr. Andrew Ristvey (aristvey@umd.edu), Extension Horticulture Specialist, and Ginny Rosenkranz (rosnkrnz@umd.edu), Extension Educator, will provide information on irrigation, plant nutrition and plant production.

For weeds, Kelly Nichols (kellyn@umd.edu), Extension Educator-Montgomery County, Nathan Glenn (nglenn@umd.edu), Extension Educator-Howard County, Mark Townsend (mtownsen@umd.edu), Extension Educator-Frederick County, and Chuck Schuster, Extension Educator (retired), will continue to cover the 'weed of the week' articles and answer questions.

IMPORTANT NOTE: You can send your emails to Suzanne Klick at sklick@umd.edu and she will forward them to the appropriate specialist. If you send an email directly to one of the UMD experts, please CC Suzanne since she will be handling photos and formatting information for the IPM report.

How to Make the Most of Digital Plant Problem Diagnostics

By: Karen Rane (rane@umd.edu), David Clement (clement@umd.edu), Andrew Ristvey (aristvey@umd.edu), and Suzanne Klick (sklick@umd.edu)

With the right photos, we can sometimes identify possible causes for plant symptoms or at least narrow down the list of possibilities. It is essential to get the right photos, however. For landscape plant problems, we need to see at least one photo of the plant, tree, or shrub with the surrounding site visible – this allows us to see problems like excessive shading, berms, or swales that could indicate drought or excessive moisture, and other site factors. We also need a few photos of the symptoms of concern. If the entire plant is brown or wilted, it can be helpful to get a photo of the base of the stem, where the plant emerges from the ground or mulch (these photos can indicate deep planting or excessive mulching as a possible problem). It should go without saying (but based on the photos we sometimes receive, clearly it needs to be said!) – the photos must be in focus!

Please look at them before you send them, to make sure that the plant in question is easily identified and the symptoms are clearly apparent. **Along with the proper images, we need information on the plant in question** – what is the species, how long has it been in the site, when did symptoms first appear, what is the distribution of the problem (all plants of many species showing symptoms, or is it just this one species?), and what, if any, pest management applications have been made. The UMD sample submission form shows the type of information that is useful for plant problem diagnosis.

Limits to Diagnosing Problems with a Photo: Although a picture may be worth a thousand words, there are limits to how far a digital diagnosis can go. Most fungal and bacterial pathogens require microscopic examination, culturing or other lab tests for a confirmed identification to genus and species. Lab testing is also required to identify specific plant pathogenic viruses, even though plant symptoms can be very suggestive of virus infection. However, even with these limitations, digital diagnostic samples can help us to assist landscape managers and growers in suggesting possible causes of plant problems and help choose management strategies.

From Andrew Ristvey: For suspected plant nutrient problems, try to send me as much information as possible over email. This would include pictures of the affected plant tissue. Be sure that your pictures are in focus which may mean several attempts at getting the right shot. This is especially true for close-ups. Also take any pics that may give clues to the potential problem. This will include wide shots of the area, and the whole plant or plants. Good resolution is also important so we can zoom images, but be careful of the size attachments you send. Our gmail system will allow large files to be sent but are limited to 25 MB. If you can manage the size of the pictures and send a total of no more than 3 pics at a time, that will be good. If you need to send more pics, send several emails. Other helpful information includes soil analyses or information about the history of the plant(s). Please include your phone contact information so we can have a conversation at which point, I'll probably ask a lot of questions.

See the March 27, 2020 IPM report article for example photos from Heather Zindash and Karen Rane.

https://extension.umd.edu/sites/extension.umd.edu/files/2021-03/20Mar27L.pdf

Quick Tip Reminders

Make sure your images are in focus before sending.

If possible, add a ruler or coin to help show the size of the subject.

On most cell phone cameras, you can tap the screen where you want it to focus. This feature helps, but it doesn't always work for tiny subjects (especially if there is a busy background).

If sending close-ups from a cell phone, send them at the highest resolution possible. It enables diagnosticians to zoom in on areas and see the subject a little bit more closely. If using a digital camera, our system can handle attachments up to 25 MB.

Get as close to your subject as possible, but remember that a camera lens has a minimum focusing distance. If you get too close, your image will be out of focus.

Optical zoom produces a higher resolution image. When zooming in on a subject too much, many cameras switch to digital zoom mode which means the image is cropped and digitally enlarged in the camera and resolution is reduced. You can search online for your cell phone or digital camera to see when or if this switch occurs. For example, on an IPhone 11, the camera switches to digital zoom beyond 2x optical zoom.