

JULY NEWSLETTER



Remember several years ago when all of the Oleanders started dying and there was a big scare that all the grape fields were also dying? Well, this was caused by the glassy winged sharp shooter that went from plant to plant infecting each with *xyella fastidiosa*, or pierce's disease. Most of the Oleanders in southern California were killed. Northern California was not affected as much because they did millions of dollars of spraying to protect the grapes.

Over the last decade, we have seen the sharp shooter carry the disease to many other plants. Liquidambar was the first I noticed. Now, it seems like every other tree is getting the disease as well, like Crape Myrtle, Sycamore, Oak, Elm, and Red Maple.

Please do not plant Liquidambar. If you have already planted them, they can be treated with Merit to kill the sharp shooter. If the tree has already been infected with *xyella*, Merit will not stop its progression. We have seen good results with the use of Merit because it stops new attacks. The cost of treatment will range from \$35 – \$200 depending on the size of the tree. If you don't treat your tree, it will die in 3 – 5 years.

I like water, but Camphor trees do not. If you look closely at all of the Camphor trees planted in lawns, you will notice that half of them are green and half are yellowish. Why? Because they get too much water in a lawn situation. They then get a fungus which I like to call fungal nails (technically, phytophthora), and then, if not treated, they die. Please do not plant Camphors in lawns. And since I'm on the topic of health, let's talk about mulching trees.

Western Arborist magazine says "there are several reasons to apply mulch."

There are several reasons to apply mulch. Mulches prevent weeds from germinating, reduce evaporative loss from soil surfaces, add organic matter to soils thereby increasing their mineral content and increase soil-borne disease suppression, and finally as shown in some studies (but not in others), increase the growth of trees planted under them.

Mulches allow space in the landscape for the deposition of organic matter from the trees growing over them – the term is litterfall. Mulching effectively controls weeds and conserves moisture. These are perhaps the most consistent effects of mulch layers. – *Western Arborist Magazine*, July 2009 issue.