

## **White spots on magnolia leaves are common**

**Q.** My magnolia tree leaves have white spots on them. These spots are especially thick on the leaves near the bottom of the younger trees. What is this and will it damage my trees?

**A.** More than likely this is a scale insect. It's probably False Oleander Scale, which is common on magnolias. If the tree is otherwise healthy, the scale will not cause permanent harm. But if the tree has been weakened by other factors such as construction damage (adding or removing soil around the roots, paving over the roots, soil compaction, etc.), storm damage or if the tree has been damaged from weed and feed applications in nearby lawn areas, then the scale could be the "last straw" for this tree. You'll find this scale on native magnolia trees out in the wild. You can spray the infested leaves with one of the horticultural oil sprays such as Ultra Fine Sun Oil but good coverage of infested leaves is important. Make sure it is summer oil, not dormant oil. If the tree is too large to spray, you may get some control with a systemic insecticide containing imidacloprid such as Bayer Advanced Garden Tree & Shrub Insect Control. If the tree is otherwise healthy, the scale should not pose a problem for the tree. For more information on this scale, visit [http://creatures.ifas.ufl.edu/orn/scales/false\\_oleander\\_scale.htm](http://creatures.ifas.ufl.edu/orn/scales/false_oleander_scale.htm).

**Q.** I have a large infestation of sandspurs. Is there anything that I can use in my lawn to get rid of this weed?

**A.** Sandspur or sandbur is a warm season annual grass. As such, it comes up from seed during spring. In the seedling stage it blends in with the lawngrass. Later in spring and summer, it produces the stickers (burs/spurs), which contain seed. The parent plants die as a result of the first killing frost or freeze. The seed remain dormant throughout winter and germinate the following spring to start the cycle all over again. Because sandbur is a true grass, there are few to no effective and safe postemergence choices for controlling this weed in a lawn. So, you'll need to apply a preemergence herbicide such as Scott's Halts (pendimethalin) during February 15 to March 1. This provides a very narrow window to achieve control. Timing is extremely important when using a preemergence herbicide. You may also need to apply a second application eight to nine weeks after the initial application to achieve season-long control. Always follow the label directions and precautions when using any pesticide, including herbicides. For more information on growing a Florida lawn, including weed control, visit <http://yourfloridalawn.ifas.ufl.edu>.

Larry Williams, UF/IFAS Extension Agent, Okaloosa County, October 29, 2009