Liriope leaf and crown rot prevented, not easily cured

Q. Some of my Evergreen Giant Liriope plants have leaf and crown rot. The installing landscape company said it's due to overwatering and that I could cut back on watering and apply a fungicide and the plants should be okay. What do you think?

A. This disease has been fairly common in Evergreen Giant Liriope. Individual leaves on diseased plants begin to turn yellow and then gradually turn tan to brown. These leaves can easily be pulled loose from the base of the plant. The base of infected leaves are rotten in appearance. With time, entire plants may die.

This disease is best prevented by planting disease free plants, being sure to not plant too deep and being careful to not water too much. Make sure to purchase healthy plants that do not exhibit any of the above symptoms. When the plants are set in the ground, make sure the top of the root ball is level or even slightly above the surrounding soil grade. Next, be extremely careful about watering. When you first plant you have to water more often to get the plants established. During establishment, water enough to keep the root area evenly moist but never soggy wet. It’s also important to not allow the roots of newly planted plants to become too dry. Liriope has considerable tolerance to drought and as a result will not require much supplemental irrigation once well established. Do not plant Liriope where there is a likelihood of frequent flooding or collection of excessive surface runoff. Presently-available fungicides probably have limited use in the landscape because they are costly and temporarily suppress but do not cure leaf and crown rot. Remove and dispose of dead or severely infected plants.

Q. My Saint Augustinegrass lawn is quickly giving way to a weed called torpedograss. Can anything be done to stop the spread of this thing?

A. I wish I had better news on this one. But there are only four options: 1. Move and leave it, 2. Live with it, 3. Dig it out or 4. Spray with a glyphosate herbicide such as Roundup. The fourth option involves repeat applications of Roundup. But keep in mind that Roundup is a nonselective herbicide, which means that it will kill the Saint Augustinegrass, too. Always follow the label directions and precautions when using any pesticide. Again, I wish I had a better answer. Maybe something will be developed in the future.

Q. I have several insects that I found on plants in my garden. It appears to me that they are eating some of my vegetables. I’d like to know what they are and how to safely control them in my garden. When is your next plant clinic in Fort Walton Beach so I can bring these critters in for identification?

A. The next plant clinic is scheduled for Thursday, August 11, 9:00 am to 12:00 noon at the Okaloosa County Extension Building, 127 West Hollywood Boulevard in Fort Walton Beach. In addition to bringing samples of the insects, it may help to also bring a fresh sample of the damage you’re seeing on the vegetables (leaves, stems or fruit that exhibit the damage in question).
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July 26, 2005