

# Down the Garden Path

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## THE GRAPE VINE

### Tick Transmitted Diseases in Indiana

Timothy J. Gibb Entomology Diagnostician

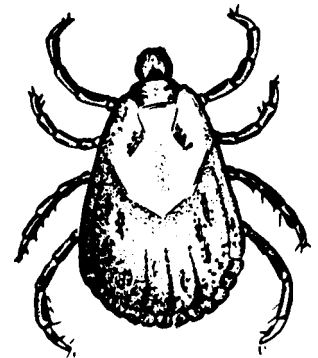
Spring and fall represent the two seasons when complaints of ticks are most common. Ticks are always a nuisance pest but can also be a serious health threat if they transmit diseases. Recent findings by the "Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever and Lyme Disease Surveillance Program" in Indiana, located at Ball State University indicate that although these two diseases can be transmitted by ticks in our state, the frequency of actual disease transmission remains fairly low. In fact, only two cases of Rocky Mountain Spotted fever and 24 cases of Lyme disease were confirmed in the state during 1998.

Based on historical data, predictions are that the cases of Rocky Mountain Spotted fever will remain low. In contrast, however, we may see an increase in the incidence of Lyme disease. This is because the spread of these diseases is a function of the species or the kind of tick that transmits them. There are several species of ticks that occur in Indiana but the most frequently reported ticks are the blacklegged tick (*Ixodes scapularis*), American dog tick (*Dermacentor variabilis*) and the Lone Star tick (*Amblyomma americanum*).

Whether or not you become a victim of either of Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, or lyme disease is a function of which tick it is that bites you. For example, the blacklegged tick and the Lone Star tick may carry the disease agent which causes Lyme disease, whereas the American Dog tick is the primary vector of Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever.

The reason that the predicted disease incidence rates may differ is because the distribution of the American Dog Tick seems to remain relatively constant from year to year. However, the distribution of the Lone Star Tick and the blacklegged tick is expanding in response to the availability of suitable hosts, primarily deer. Thus, expanding populations could also result in an increase in the number of cases of Lyme disease reported in our state.

The seasonal distribution of the ticks reported are also closely related to the species of ticks found. For example, the majority of the springtime ticks are American dog ticks, whereas the majority of ticks during the fall are blacklegged ticks. If you are interested in having a particular tick identified or tested for diseases, you may call Dr. Bob Pinger in the Department of Physiology and Health Science at Ball State University at 765-285-1504. The tick will need to be submitted alive and in good condition in order to perform the test. ☺



## GARDEN

### Spring Pruning of Roses

B. Rosie Lerner, *Extension Consumer Horticulturist*

Now is the time to be prepare your garden roses for the coming growing season. Winter mulch and styrofoam covers should be removed as soon as new growth becomes apparent. Since a late freeze is still possible, it is a good idea to keep the winter mulch nearby for quick protection.

The next step is to prune roses to remove any dead, diseased or otherwise damaged canes and to control the quantity and quality of flowers produced. The severe low temperatures back in December may have taken their toll on many roses, even some that were covered.

Cut back badly damaged or dead canes down to the base of the plant. Completely remove any suckers or shoots which arise from the rootstock. Slightly damaged canes only need to be cut back to healthy tissue. Be sure to cut back to an outward facing bud so that new growth will occur towards the outside of the plant. This will ensure good air circulation around the plant which helps minimize disease problems.

For bush-type roses, aim to have four to eight strong canes cut to a uniform height, which spread out away from the center of the plant in the shape of a V. This will prevent overcrowding inside the plant framework, which would shade out the planting.

Climbing roses are pruned differently, depending on the type of climber. Everblooming climbers which bloom throughout the growing season should need little pruning the first few years. As with all roses, remove any dead or weak wood. Thereafter, remove the oldest, longer canes which have become unproductive. Younger canes (two to three years old) produce the most flowers and should be cut back to two to three healthy buds.

Climbers which bloom only once should be pruned immediately after blooms fade since buds form on previous year's growth. As with raspberries, canes which bear flowers this year should be completely removed to allow space for the new canes to develop and produce buds for next year's season.

Shrub roses rarely need to be shaped and heavy pruning may just destroy the plant's natural beauty. Pruning of shrub roses should be limited to removal of dead or damaged wood and thinning of excessive growth. ☺



## OVER THE BACK FENCE

**Q:** Everyone seems to be talking about hunting mushrooms now. What is the secret to successful mushroom hunting?

**A:** Most mushroom hunters in search of edible feasts this time of year are in search of the delightful morel, or sometimes called the sponge mushroom.



*True Morels*

I had the privilege of studying mycology at Iowa State University by Dr. Lois Tiffany. Dr. Tiffany has completed a ten-year survey on the distribution of morels and false morels. Much of the following information was gleaned from that study.

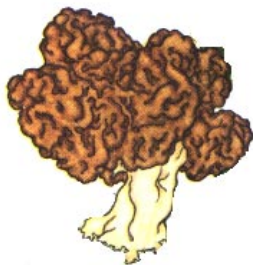
Three species make up the most prized morels, referred to as the gray to yellow group or *Morchella esculenta* complex. Actually, the morels are not mushrooms because they do not have gills. Rather, they belong to a group of fungi called ascomycetes.

The secret to successful morel hunting is often based on luck more than anything else. Many have told incredible stories about their hunting excursions. Some experienced hunters have said that morels are most often found in open wooded areas, on the edges of dense woods or in old orchards. Others say to look specifically on south slopes, under dead or dying elms or under living ash or oak trees. Others have said that the magical spot for morels can be in your own back yard!

In Indiana, mid-April to mid-May is the prime time for morel hunting. The thrill of the hunt is the unknown. You never know when or where you might find one. It is often said that success depends on being in the right place and the right time.

Regardless of the thrill, mushroom hunting can be one of the most dangerous of outdoor sports. Proper identification is the key to safety. Although there are several species of morels that are tasty, some people can be allergic to them. Additionally, false morels (*Gyromitra* spp.), often described as poisonous, are commonly found in the same areas where the true morels are found. **FALSE MORELS SHOULD NOT BE EATEN.**

True morels are generally two to eight inches in height with a tan, light brown to gray, pitted, spongelike cap on a hollow stalk. All or most of the cap is attached to the stem (this can be determined by splitting the morel longitudinally). False morels are broader, with reddish to dark brown irregularly wrinkled, folded, or convoluted caps.



*False Morel*

As the saying goes, "There are old mushroom eaters and there are bold mushroom eaters, but there are no old bold mushroom eaters." Be careful. -- Peggy Sellers ☺

## YARD

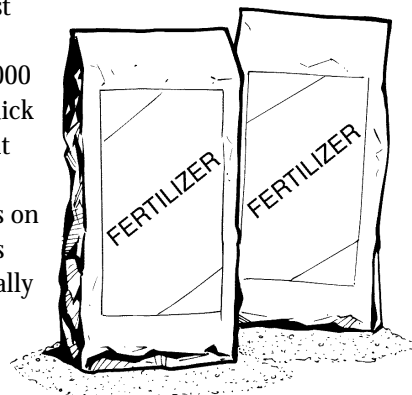
### Clarifying Spring Fertilization

*Zac Reicher, Turfgrass Extension Specialist*

Many different theories exist on spring fertilization, but the one fact agreed upon by all turf specialists is to avoid applying heavy rates of nitrogen in March or April. Heavy rates would be anything greater than 0.75 lbs of N/1000 sq ft, which will cause excessive shoot growth now and decrease stress tolerance in the summer. However, most specialists agree that applying a limited amount of nitrogen (up to 0.75 lbs N/1000 sq ft) in the early spring will produce quick green-up while not producing significant negative effects over the long term.

The success of this fertilization hinges on accurate application, but these low rates are difficult to apply evenly and are usually reserved only for professionals. If a November fertilizer application was made, the turf will green-up very quickly in the spring making the results from a March or April nitrogen application less noticeable. Therefore, some use this early application while others prefer to wait until after the spring growth flush and apply 0.75-1.0 lbs N/1000 sq ft in mid- to late May.

Additionally, almost all preemergence herbicides are now formulated with fertilizer as the carrier to minimize expense and make them easier to apply. Therefore, if preemergence herbicide is needed, fertilizer will almost inevitably be applied with it. To limit the nitrogen applied, try to purchase the herbicide/fertilizer combination that contains the lowest percentage of nitrogen and one that contains some slow release nitrogen. ☺



### Growth Regulators for Lawns? Don't Get Your Hopes Up

*Zac Reicher, Turfgrass Extension Specialist*

The ultimate dream of homeowners to have a nice lawn that never needs mowing is an impossibility. However, recent information in newspapers suggests that a recently released growth regulator, Proxy from Rhone Poulenc, might be available for use on home lawns someday. Though there are five growth regulators available to professional turf managers, there are currently NO growth regulators available to homeowners to apply themselves. Growth regulators are normally not recommended on home lawns for a variety of reasons. Growth regulators as a whole are difficult to apply because extremely accurate applications are needed. The degree of regulation is often variable among cultivars and/or species and thus a uniform response will not be produced across the entire lawn. The growth reduction is difficult to detect by the untrained eye because the application does not stop growth, rather just reduces it. Thus the expense of an application is not easily justified by the homeowner. Additionally, sequential applications of growth regulators every four to six weeks will be needed for the longest lasting effects. ☺

## Volutella Blight on Pachysandra

Gail Ruhl, Plant Disease Diagnostician



*Volutella blight on Pachysandra*

If you have recently noticed foliar and stem dieback on your pachysandra, it is likely due to cold injury, given the timing of cold temperature exposures this spring. However, these symptoms could also be due to a devastating fungal disease, Volutella blight, that causes leaf blight and stem canker.

Infections often begin in damaged or senescent plant parts and spread into healthy plant parts. Infected leaves first develop tan or brown blotches with dark brown margins, which expand, often with concentric lighter and darker zones. Stem and stolon cankers can become numerous, causing plants to wilt and die. Cankers appear as watersoaked diseased areas, turn brown, shrivel and often girdle the stem. This disease can destroy large areas in a bed.

Volutella is a wound parasite, capable of girdling stems within two weeks of infection. Under warm, humid conditions in late spring and summer, the fungus produces pink fruiting structures containing masses of fungal spores on the surfaces of cankers and undersurfaces of infected leaves. Volutella blight of pachysandra is often associated with plant stresses such as recent transplanting, exposure to bright sunlight, shearing, scale insects, and previous winter or cold damage.

Normally this disease does little damage to vigorous plants. Therefore, the most important control measure is to provide good growing conditions. Some pachysandra beds have been aided by thinning of the plants to reduce dampness and humidity. Severely diseased plants should be dug out and destroyed. Fungicides such as chlorothalonil or mancozeb can be used for control if needed. ☺

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