

**Two Common Tree Problems**  
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Each year I receive calls concerning herbicide drift on lawns. This is most often from accidental drift, but can also be from root uptake when a product containing Trimec or Banvel (dicamba) was used nearby to control "creeping charlie" or other broadleaf weeds. Most broadleaf plants (trees, shrubs, etc.) are susceptible and often show the cupping, twisting and prominent veins typical when leaves are exposed to 2,4-D, MCPP and other phenoxy herbicides.

Plants may "grow out of" the damage, provided it was minimal to begin with. Established, woody plants are usually more likely to bounce back, though foliage will remain distorted. Cupped leaves can still photosynthesize and create food energy for the plant. Edible plants should not be used if they've been hit by herbicide. If you accidentally get herbicide on non-target plants, hose them down immediately. You may eliminate most of the damage.

All of this points again to the wisdom of spraying for broadleaf weeds in autumn when there's less young (particularly vulnerable to herbicide drift) vegetation around, and when the weeds themselves can be killed more easily because they're storing carbohydrates in their roots for next year's growth. Applying lawn herbicides after a killing frost in the fall is the most effective way to control broadleaf weeds in your lawn.

Another common problem many people have noticed is strange bead-like bumps or velvety growths on the leaves of maples this spring. These growths, known as maple leaf galls, have been extremely abundant in some cases. Fortunately, the galls have little impact on the health of maples even though trees give the appearance of being diseased.

These galls are formed by the feeding of very small insect relatives known as eriophyid mites. The mites measure about 0.15 millimeters (about 1/170 inch). They spend the winter in cracks and crevices in bark. During early spring they move to developing leaf buds and begin to feed on the underside of leaves. Plant cells around the feeding site become distorted. Despite its appearance, it's not necessary to control maple bladder galls to protect the health of maples. Vigorous, mature trees are not seriously injured despite the presence of these galls. Even when trees are heavily infested, maples still have enough green leaf tissue to maintain their vitality.

Once you see galls, it's too late for control; the most effective time to treat your tree is in the spring as buds first open and the leaves are first expanding. Even when you attempt management, control is often difficult and not practical. Plants that are heavily infested one year may be lightly affected the next year, making control unnecessary. In short, there's little that one can do about galls and the harm they cause is insignificant, so there's little to worry about.

Source: Will Yliniemi, University of Minnesota Extension Educator

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