

## Mound Vue Garden Club

### Confessions of a Black Thumb: Plants That I Have Killed (Or at Least Seriously Maimed)

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## Confessions of a Black Thumb Drought Stress

- **Victims**
  - Hostas
  - Many a potted plant
- **Causes of the problem**
  - Unwillingness to water
  - Cluelessness that plants really DO need water

## Confessions of a Black Thumb Drought Stress



## Confessions of a Black Thumb Drought Stress

- **Lessons learned**
  - **Water adequately**
    - ~1 inch of water per week for established plants
    - ~1.5 to 2 inches of water per week for new transplants
  - **Mulch properly**
    - ~1 to 2 inches for heavier (clay) soils
    - ~3 to 4 inches for lighter (sandy) soils

## Confessions of a Black Thumb Drought Stress

- **Other considerations**
  - **Water correctly**
    - Use a drip or soaker hose
    - DO NOT use a sprinkler
  - **Water at the correct time**
    - Water when it is cool (late evening/early morning)
    - DO NOT water when it is hot (mid-day)

## Confessions of a Black Thumb Overwatering

- **Victim: Dappled willow**
- **Causes of the problem**
  - Pure unadulterated stupidity
  - Inability to admit I can't remember everything
  - Inability to set a timer

### Confessions of a Black Thumb Overwatering



### Confessions of a Black Thumb Overwatering

- **Lessons learned**
  - Buy AND USE a timer!
  - DO NOT overwater
    - ~1 inch of water per week for established plants
    - ~1.5 to 2 inches of water per week for new transplants
  - How and when you water can be immaterial
  - How much you mulch can be immaterial
- **Other considerations: None**

### Confessions of a Black Thumb Walnut Toxicity

- **Victim: Fothergilla**
- **Cause of the problem**
  - Planting plants susceptible to juglones
  - Not removing walnuts planted by neighborhood squirrels

### Confessions of a Black Thumb Walnut Toxicity



### Confessions of a Black Thumb Walnut Toxicity

- **Lessons learned**
  - Walnut trees really CAN kill other plants
  - Be careful what you plant near established walnuts
  - Remove volunteer walnut trees promptly

### Confessions of a Black Thumb Walnut Toxicity

- **Other considerations**
  - Vegetables can have problems with juglones
    - Sensitive: pepper, eggplant, potato, TOMATO
    - Tolerant: beans, beet, carrot, corn, melon, onion, parsnip, squash
  - Making raised beds may help prevent issues
  - DO not use or compost walnut leaves or fruits
  - Cutting down a walnut will not immediately solve your problems

### Confessions of a Black Thumb Verticillium Wilt

- **Victim: Redbud**
- **Causes of the problem**
  - Planting a susceptible host
  - Bad luck

### Confessions of a Black Thumb Verticillium Wilt



### Confessions of a Black Thumb Verticillium Wilt

- **Lessons learned**
  - You can inherit plant disease problems
  - Sometimes the stars are against you
  - Sometimes diseases can serve as biocontrol

### Confessions of a Black Thumb Verticillium Wilt

- **Other considerations**
  - Resistant/immune plants can be your friends
    - Pines, spruces, firs, junipers
    - Beech, birch, ginkgo, hackberry, hawthorn, hickory, honey locust, mountain ash, white oak, bur oak, poplar, serviceberry, sycamore, willow
  - Clean up leaf litter
  - Avoid municipal mulches
  - Fungicides will not likely help

### Confessions of a Black Thumb Phomopsis Tip Blight

- **Victim(s): 'Moonglow' juniper (15)**
- **Causes of the problem**
  - Really, REALLY poor variety selection
  - Crowding shrubs
  - Planting in an overly shaded area
  - Lack of proper watering

### Confessions of a Black Thumb Phomopsis Tip Blight



## Confessions of a Black Thumb Phomopsis Tip Blight

- **Lessons learned**
  - Use appropriate resistant cultivars/varieties
    - “Juniper Diseases”  
(Contact the PDDC for a copy)
    - “Disease and Insect Resistant Ornamental Plants: Juniperus (Junipers)”  
(<https://ecommons.cornell.edu/handle/1813/56372.2>)
  - **DO NOT** crowd plants when planting
  - Use the right plant in the right location
  - Water when needed

## Confessions of a Black Thumb Phomopsis Tip Blight

- **Other considerations**
  - Avoid over-fertilization (nitrogen)
  - Prune diseased branches, but avoid excessive pruning
  - Decontaminate pruning tools  
(70% alcohol, disinfectants, bleach)
  - Destroy infected materials  
(burn where allowed, bury)

## Confessions of a Black Thumb Phomopsis Tip Blight

- **Other considerations**
  - Consider fungicides where appropriate
    - Is this how you want to spend your time?
    - Apply from bud break through period of rapid growth
    - Apply every 7-21 days
    - Mancozeb, copper, thiophanate-methyl
    - Alternate active ingredients (FRAC Codes)

## Confessions of a Black Thumb Winter Injury

- **Victim:** Japanese maple
- **Cause of the problem**
  - Wanting to grow non-hardy plants

## Confessions of a Black Thumb Winter Injury



## Confessions of a Black Thumb Winter Injury

- **Lessons learned**
  - Just because you love it, doesn't mean you should plant it
  - Use appropriate cold hardy plants
  - Pray for
    - Lots of snow
    - A slow, gradual winter cool down
    - Limited temperature fluctuations
    - A slow spring warm up

### Confessions of a Black Thumb Winter Injury

- Other considerations
  - Plant trees and shrubs
    - Properly
    - In protected locations (sensitive plants)
  - Water trees and shrubs properly
  - Protect sensitive plants

### Confessions of a Black Thumb Rhizosphaera Needle Cast

- Victim: 'Fat Albert' blue spruce
- Cause of the problem
  - Planting a blue spruce
  - Not taking into account environmental changes in my landscape
  - Overcrowding
  - Lack of proper watering
  - Planting a blue spruce, planting a blue spruce, planting a blue spruce!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

### Confessions of a Black Thumb Rhizosphaera Needle Cast



### Confessions of a Black Thumb Rhizosphaera Needle Cast

- Lessons learned
  - DO NOT plant blue spruce, DO NOT plant blue spruce, DO NOT PLANT BLUE SPRUCE!!!!!!!!!!
  - DO NOT crowd plants
  - Landscape environmental conditions change
  - Plants survive better when cared for properly
  - Plants have a finite life span (some more than others)
  - Sometimes it's better to cut and run

### Confessions of a Black Thumb Rhizosphaera Needle Cast

- Other considerations
  - Plant dwarf blue spruce varieties
  - Thin healthy branches to increase airflow
  - Prune diseased branches
  - Consider fungicides where appropriate
    - Is this how you want to spend your time?
    - Copper, chlorothalonil
    - Ever 3-4 weeks starting at bud break while favorable environmental conditions occur

### Confessions of a Black Thumb Tar Spot

- Victim: Norway maple
- Causes of the problem
  - Lack of time due to work obligations
  - Laziness

## Confessions of a Black Thumb Tar Spot



## Confessions of a Black Thumb Tar Spot

- **Lessons learned**
  - Make time for gardening
  - DO NOT be lazy
  - Do proper leaf clean up
    - Fall or early spring
    - Burn where allowed, bury, hot compost

## Confessions of a Black Thumb Tar Spot

- **Other considerations**
  - Consider fungicides where appropriate
    - Most often never
    - Young or focal point trees
    - Copper applied at bud break, 1/2 and full leaf expansion

## Confessions of a Black Thumb Hosta Virus X

- **Victim: Hosta**
- **Cause of the problem**
  - Buying infected plants
  - Not removing infected plants promptly
  - Moving the virus while gardening

## Confessions of a Black Thumb Hosta Virus X



## Confessions of a Black Thumb Hosta Virus X

- **Lessons learned**
  - You can bring diseases home from the store
    - ‘Gold Edger’
    - ‘Golden Tiara’
    - ‘Sum and Substance’
    - ‘Gold Standard’
    - ‘Striptease’
  - You may not know that the plant is diseased
  - You can easily move this virus
    - Shovels
    - Lawnmowers
    - Knives
    - String Edgers

## Confessions of a Black Thumb Hosta Virus X

- **Other considerations**
  - Infected plants should be removed (burn where allowed, bury, hot compost)
  - Be sure to decontaminate
    - 1% Sodium dodecyl sulfate (sodium lauryl sulfate) + 1% Alconox® (2½ Tbsp + 2¾ Tbsp/gal)
    - Trisodium phosphate (14 dry oz/gal)
    - Alcohol dip followed by flaming

## Confessions of a Black Thumb Tobacco Rattle

- **Victims**
  - Bleeding heart
  - Goldenrod
  - Likely many others
- **Causes of the problem**
  - Buying infected plants
  - Not removing infected plants

## Confessions of a Black Thumb Tobacco Rattle



## Confessions of a Black Thumb Tobacco Rattle

- **Lessons learned**
  - You can bring diseases home from the store
  - You may not know that the plant is diseased
  - Diseased plants can survive for a long time
  - Disease symptoms can look quite beautiful
  - Diseased plants can be useful (at least to me)

## Confessions of a Black Thumb Tobacco Rattle

- **Other considerations**
  - This virus is easily moved from plant to plant (mechanically, via nematodes)
  - This virus is a HUGE deal in potato production
  - Infected plants should be removed (burn where allowed, bury, hot compost)
  - Immune plants are limited
    - Annual phlox, carnation, *Datura*, sweet William, zinnia

## Confessions of a Black Thumb Tobacco Rattle

- **Other considerations**
  - You need to decontaminate
    - 1% Sodium dodecyl sulfate (sodium lauryl sulfate) + 1% Alconox® (2½ Tbsp + 2¾ Tbsp/gal)
    - Trisodium phosphate (14 dry oz/gal)
    - Alcohol dip followed by flaming

**Confessions of a Black Thumb**  
Where to Go for Help (?)

Plant Disease Diagnostics Clinic  
Department of Plant Pathology  
University of Wisconsin-Madison  
1630 Linden Drive  
Madison, WI 53706-1598  
(608) 262-2863  
pddc@wisc.edu  
<https://pddc.wisc.edu>

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