

## Honeylocust & Locust Pod Gall - More New Varieties

'Sunburst' Honeylocust and other thornless honeylocusts suffer from this insect; and a bit about new varieties this year!

by Art Drysdale

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Art Drysdale, a life-long resident of Toronto and a horticulturist well known all across Canada, is now a resident of Parksville, British Columbia on Vancouver Island, just north of Nanaimo. He has renovated an old home and has a new garden there. His radio gardening vignettes are heard in south-western Ontario over two radio stations: Easy 101 FM out of Tillsonburg at 2 PM weekdays and CD98.9 FM out of Norfolk County at 11:40 AM weekdays.



Art also has his own website at <http://www.artdrysdale.com>

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Above: a young 'Sunburst' Honeylocust in good shape; and the foliage of a Honeylocust tree showing the pod galls containing the larvae that do the damage.  
Below: two of the new black petunias introduced this year ('Phantom' photo by Ball FloraPlant). Author photos.

I'll start off this week with a question from Jim Booker of Oshawa, Ontario, sent to Donna Dawson. Jim says, "Hi: I don't know if this is the proper place for this question, but here it is. Five years ago we had our landscaping done. We planted a Sunburst Honey Locust tree which was and still is quite stunning! However, the last couple of years, the tree leafs out fine on the bottom 2/3 of the tree, but the top leaves seem to shrivel and are either falling off or are being eaten. All that is left are the stems. I don't see any evidence on the ground, so I'm assuming they are being eaten. Whatever this is, it starts at the top and works its way down the tree. I really don't like using sprays, but I don't want to lose this tree either! Soooo! I have some Bug Be Gone in the garage that is left over from before if you know what I mean? The last 2 years I sprayed the tree with it and the tree thrives afterward. It is forming new growth all over. I also see little red seed-like looking things on the tip of just one branch. I honestly checked all of the other branches, and nothing. These things are shaped like a teardrop, round on one end and pointed at the other. They are not Spidermites. They look like seedpods. I sprayed them with insecticidal soap and they did not move. Does anyone have any SOUND solutions for my problems?"

Your problem Jim is a common one that I first saw in Niagara Falls in 1962. It seems to vary in its presence for I do remember after some very bad years in the mid 60s it seemed to wane, and then became very prevalent almost a decade later.

It is Locust Pod Gall, and is caused by a tiny insect, or midge, known as *Dasineura gleditschiae*. The tiny (3 mm) adult flies over-winter in the soil and will swarm around the trees in early spring just as new foliage begins to show. They lay eggs, virtually microscopic, which hatch in just a few days into larvae about 3 to 6 mm in length. These begin eating on the new young foliage causing the foliage to turn into the galls you notice. Soon the larvae are enclosed in these galls. In a few weeks they pupate, and soon a new adult emerges, and the whole process may be repeated, or there may just be one generation, depending on the year and the climate. The dried up galls eventually



fall off making the tree look somewhat bare of good foliage, and some smaller branches may be killed.

Although I realize you are in “no-spray” Ontario, many jurisdictions such as other provinces and many U.S. states recommend spraying weekly, beginning as soon as the foliage begins to open in spring, with Carbaryl (Sevin) or Diazinon, but of course that option is not open to you! In checking on the Web I find no other valid recommendation, but I can tell you of a plan used by some horticulturists in Canada a way back in the 60s and 70s. That is to take a pair of scissors and cut off all or most of the galled foliage, and place it out in the garbage, or burn it. Certainly, do not compost it.

This is quite a major undertaking, especially if the tree is large. Once it is done, the tree will look thin because of all the tip foliage that has been removed, but, it will look no worse than the tree would just a little later in the season once the galls have dried and fallen off. The theory behind the clipping of the galls is that by ridding the tree of the larvae permanently, and doing it several years in a row, it is quite possible that the number of insects left to re-infect in following years is reduced, and hence the damage in subsequent years will be lessened.

Another important part of keeping the trees healthy is to keep them growing in a strong way. That means providing extra fertilizer for the trees, either in the form of granular high nitrogen fertilizer applied to the ground surface around the drip spread of the trees, drilling in fertilizer spikes in the drip spread area, or applying liquid fertilizer (20-20-20) to the foliage at least three times during the spring season.

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If you are still buying annual flowers, here are a couple of items you might keep an eye out for; although most may be already sold in many locations.

‘Black Velvet’ *Petunia* is one of the highlights of this year’s trials. This hybrid vegetatively-produced *Petunia* from Ball FloraPlant produces black velvet flowers on upright mounding plants. ‘Phantom’ is a black-coloured flowering *Petunia* with a contrasting yellow star pattern. There is variability in the star pattern. ‘Pinstripe’ is the third dark flowered cultivar released. Plants produce dark purple flowers with a thin creamy-white star pattern.

Although Golden State Bulb Growers is best known for its Callifornia Callas (yes, Callifornia), the plant that received much of the attention from trial visitors was Aloha Lily ‘Leia’ *Eucomis*. The plant produces spikes of fragrant lavender flowers for about a month after which it forms darker coloured seed pods that last an additional month and a half.

The newly formed vegetable seed-breeding company, Vegetalis (located in the U.K.) continues to expand its offerings for the home garden vegetable production with a half-dozen varieties bred specifically for home garden performance. ‘Floral Spires’ basil series consists of two compact culinary varieties - Lavender and White - both bred with ornamental value in mind. Plants have a four to five week flowering period before starting to form seed.