Lichens are not Killing Your Plants and Trees

Nature is full of mysteries, and there is a fascinating one just outside in your landscape. We don't have to look very far to find one of these marvels of creation, the lichen, thriving in our warm, humid, Mississippi climate. At first glance, the papery or fuzzy, white, gray or green growth might lead us to believe that lichen are just another parasite, working to destroy our landscape trees and ornamentals. Although lichen are often found associated with plants that are dead, dying or declining, we must remember that this is only circumstantial evidence, and the lichen is innocent until proven guilty.

Remember way back (for some of us) in junior high school science class when we first learned the meaning of symbiosis? A symbiotic relationship is one in which two organisms live in close relationship with one another to the benefit of each. Such is the case of the lichen. What appears to be one organism are actually two, an algae and a fungus living together that have formed one body. The algae, a green plant, can make its own food, and in this case, shares with the fungus. The fungus, on the other hand supplies the structure, or thallus, within which the algae lives. Lichen can be found attached to healthy plants or those in dead or dying condition. Although sometimes unsightly, they are not parasitic and do not contribute to the poor quality of a plant.

Believe it or not, lichen is actually beneficial to humans for several reasons. First, they are sensitive to air pollution and are commonly used by researchers to determine the air quality of a region. If lichen thrives in your neighborhood, it's a good indicator of quality air. Drug companies use lichen substances to make antibiotics. Some lichens make nitrogen in the air more available to other plants. People eat some lichens but remember a few of them are poisonous! Lichens can also be used to make dye for coloring wool.

It is usually not necessary to treat plants to control lichens. The best practice is to keep landscape plants healthy and growing vigorously. However, for trees and shrubs that lose their leaves in winter (including fruit and nut), tribasic copper sulfate may be used at the rate of 4 teaspoonsfuls per gallon of water to remove unwanted lichens. Add a spreader sticker to the spray mix and avoid contact with evergreen plants. Remember to always follow label directions when applying pesticides. Happy Gardening!
## Upcoming Events for March 2019

### Hancock County Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Growing Great Tomatoes</td>
<td>2:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Pass Christian Public Library</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tomatoes are the most popular vegetable for home gardeners. This program will provide information on how to be successful growing tomatoes in south Mississippi as well as how to manage many of the common problems home gardeners face when growing tomatoes. The presenter is Dr. Christian Stephenson, Hancock County Extension Agent.

### Harrison County Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>The Hancock/Harrison County Forestry and Wildlife Association Meeting</td>
<td>5:30 p.m.</td>
<td>MSU Coastal Research &amp; Extension Center</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Registration begins at 5:30 p.m. at the MSU Coastal Research & Extension Center at 1815 Popps Ferry Rd. in Biloxi. Dr. Rich Vlosky will be discussing “Influencer Perceptions, Use, and Understanding of Cross-laminated Timber in the U.S. South”. Cross-laminated is an exciting new forest product that is being used to construct multi-story buildings around the world. Dr. Vlosky is Director of the Louisiana Forest Products Development Center and Crosby Land and Resources Endowed Professor in Forest Sector Business Development at the Louisiana State University Agricultural Center in Baton Rouge. This program is free to current Hancock/Harrison CFWA members and $10 for non-members including dinner. To preregister for this event, call Tim Ray at Harrison County Extension at 228-865-4227 by March 18th.

### Pearl River County Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Pearl River County Master Gardener Meeting</td>
<td>12:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Crosby Arboretum in Picayune, MS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Pearl River-Stone County Forestry Association Meeting</td>
<td>12:00 noon</td>
<td>The Sawmill Restaurant, 2205 Highway 49, Wiggins, MS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Amy Nichols will be speaking to the group about Native Bees and Pollinators.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Plant Propagation Workshop</td>
<td>10:00 a.m. until 12:00 noon</td>
<td>Crosby Arboretum in Picayune, MS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Join Dr. Eddie Smith to learn different ways to propagate plants. This workshop will include a hands-on experience with propagating different types of plants. Call 601-799-2311 to register for this workshop. There is a $10.00 charge for non-members and an $8.00 charge for members.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Butterfly Gardening</td>
<td>11:00 a.m. until 12:00 noon</td>
<td>The Senior Center of South Pearl River County</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Presenter: Dr. Eddie Smith, County Coordinator/Extension Agent. No RSVP required.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Private Applicator Training</td>
<td>9:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Pearl River County Extension Office, 401 West Lamar Street, Poplarville, MS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This training is for those who own or lease property for agricultural purposes. $20 per individual payable by check or money order. Call 601-403-2280 to preregister.

### Stone County Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Pearl River-Stone County Forestry Association Meeting</td>
<td>12:00 noon</td>
<td>The Sawmill Restaurant, 2205 Highway 49, Wiggins, MS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dr. John Willis will be doing a program on Longleaf Pine vs. Loblolly Pine: Understanding the Key Differences in Management.

### 2019 Landscape Symposium pre-registration deadline

Once again it is time for our annual Landscape Symposium in Stone County. The date is April 5, 2019, at the Gulf Coast Community College, Perkinston Campus, just off Highway 49 in Perkinston (straight up Highway 49 from the Coast). Registration begins at 8:30 a.m. The program starts at 9:00 a.m. Watch for the signs to get you to the campus and the correct building (student center building) on the campus. Mark the date and join us. Master Gardener training hours are available. Lunch is included. Program ends about 2:00 p.m.

**Pre-registration by March 22, $10.00. Registration after March 22 and on-site is $15.00. Call 601-928-5286 to pre-register and pay at the door.**
Garden Calendar: March

Planting
- Plant new roses before March 15.
- Broad-leaved Evergreens such as Magnolia and Holly can be set out at this time.
- Plant cold weather annuals: Sweet William, English Daisies, Pansies, and Calendulas.
- Divide Mondo Grass and Liriope. Divide Cannas, Chrysanthemums, Coreopsis, Phlox, and Obedient Plant.
- Start seeds for Tomatoes, Bell Peppers, and Eggplant. Set out Thyme, Lemon Balm, Oregano, Chives, Sage, and Winter Savory.
- Sow seeds of Johnny Jump-ups, Sweet Peas, Larkspur, Forget-me-nots, and Baby Blue Eyes.
- Flowering shrubs may be moved at this time. Larger shrubs should be moved with a ball of dirt and smaller shrubs may be moved bare-rooted.
- This is the best month to move Crape myrtles.
- Lawns may be sodded at this time. Plant Gladiolus throughout this month for continuous bloom. Plant Hostas.
- Caladiums can be started in outdoor containers as soon as weather warms.

Fertilizing
- Fertilize all the garden except acid-loving plants.
- Topdress Camellias with azalea-camellia fertilizer.
- Lime Peonies, Clematis, and Boxwoods.

Pest Control
- Spray new rose leaves for black spot weekly.

Pruning
- Prune roses at this time. Remove dead and weak canes. Properly dispose of clippings.
- Prune Crape Myrtles and Altheas.
- Prune evergreens for shape and size as early in the month as possible.
- Cut English Ivy back very hard. It will come back very nicely in the spring.
- Trim Mondo Grass and Liriope with lawn mower set on highest setting (6 inches). Dispose of trimmings.

Mulch
- Replenish mulch around Azaleas and Camellias.

Miscellaneous
- Dispose of fallen Camellia blossoms to prevent blight.
- Rake up seed hulls from under bird feeders. They will smother new growth.
- Remove dead flowers from Tulips and Daffodils. Do not cut foliage before it turns yellow and dies.

In Bloom
Bluebells, Chionodoxa, Daffodil, Hyacinth, early Iris, Pansies, Violet, Carolina Jasmine, Azaleas, Camellias, Forsythia, Pearl Bush, Photinia, Flowering Quince, Spirea, flowering fruit trees (Crabapple, Cherry, Pear, and Peach), Oriental Magnolia, and Redbud.
Plants are very susceptible to disease early in their development. Often seedlings will fail to come up or will die shortly after germination. Frequently, stems of seedlings are attacked at the soil line, or shoots may be decayed as they emerge. These conditions are collectively referred to as "damping-off". Damping-off is usually caused by one of several plant pathogens present in the soil. Two of the most common of these pathogens are Pythium and Phytophthora. These organisms are closely related to fungi, but are placed in a separate classification called oomycetes or water molds. Damping-off may also be caused by true fungi such as Rhizoctonia or Fusarium.

The pathogens that cause damping-off are present in almost all soils and may remain in soil for a long period of time on decaying organic material or as spores. Vigorously growing seedlings are able to resist attack by these pathogens, as are older plants. Damping-off is frequently seen when seeds are planted in cold, wet soils. Poor drainage may also make problems with damping-off worse.

The first sign of damping-off is usually that many plants fail to germinate. Seeds that are attacked become soft and dark brown. Fine threads of fungal growth may be visible on the seeds. If plants are attacked after germination, tissue of the stem near the soil line is decayed often causing plants to fall over. Occasionally plants will survive after damping-off damages the roots but will wilt and die later in plant development.

The most important way to control damping-off is sanitation. Pathogen spores can survive in dust, planting media and on flats or pots. Removal of diseased plants and sterilization of containers will reduce the amount of the pathogen present and help control the problem. Vigorously growing seedlings are less susceptible, so planting high quality seed will also reduce problems with damping-off. Some seeds are treated with fungicides to protect them against damping-off pathogens and these may be purchased, especially if you have a history of damping-off in your garden. Avoid overwatering and heavy use of nitrate fertilizers as these provide a favorable environment to the pathogens. Starting seedlings in flats with peat or coir pellets may also help prevent damping-off.
I receive a lot of calls about lawns throughout the year, usually starting with the statement “my lawn is not looking good”. Let’s face it, we have our share of potential causes to lawn problems, and properly identifying the cause is the first step in getting the lawn in shape. But, one must keep in mind that maintaining a great-looking lawn requires a bit of work, and patience. You can refer to Extension Publication 1322, Establish and Manage Your Home Lawn on the MSU Extension website for more information, but here are a few tips:

Have you gotten your soil tested? If the answer is no, then please do. This will allow us (or you) to move forward to solve the problem IF no disease or insect pressure is detected. If your answer is yes, then great! When you receive your soil test results the first thing you should look for is pH. Different grass types like different pH levels. For instance, Centipede does better when the pH is lower (4.5-6) than St. Augustine (6-7.5). Then look for any nutritional needs. It’s important to understand that some grass types, such as Centipede and St. Augustine do not like to be overly maintained, therefore, good maintenance is low maintenance. The soil test results will provide you with recommendations based on your grass type.

Ask yourself about the shade situation. St. Augustine is the most shade tolerant grass for our area followed by Zoysia. Although Centipede does have very minor shade tolerance, it does love much more sunlight than shade, therefore, I’d consider it more of a full-sun grass than shade tolerant. In fact, all grasses need some direct sunlight so if you have heavy shade consider having your trees trimmed or thinned to allow more sunlight to come through. Some areas may be too shaded even with a little thinning so consider adding beds with shade plants or groundcover to improve aesthetics.

Improving drainage by aeration or leveling the lawn with good soil can aid in preventing some lawn problems. Water that sits in low areas can kill the grass or cause disease, particularly during periods of heavy rainfall which we’ve had the last few years. Aeration will allow better water and air movement and increase root growth. If you need to re-sod or seed this is a great first step during renovation.

Lastly, we have arrived at the time of year when insect and disease pressure increases. If you see yellowing and/or browning in the lawn it could be either one but identifying it correctly is the only way to have success. If you suspect you may have either of these, please refrain from fertilizing until it’s controlled, otherwise, it can increase the intensity. You can contact your local Extension office to help you identify the problem and provide the proper control methods.
As we move into spring, you may start to notice patches of green broadleaf weeds popping up and becoming more noticeable in dormant warm-season grass sods. One of the more common of these is a cool-season annual weed named henbit, which germinates in the fall and continues to grow through the spring. This pesky weed can be identified with its rounded or triangular leaves with rounded lobes, greenish to purple square stems, and when in bloom it has tiny bright pink or purple flowers with long necks. The seeds of henbit are rather small, but can number over 2,000 per plant. The prolific seed production of henbit enables it to establish in a lawn after just a few seasons if not controlled. As such, being able to identify and treat isolated areas is key to saving yourself headaches down the road.

Maintaining an optimal mowing height in combination with fertilization and irrigation as needed will promote a healthy lawn that will exclude open ground for weeds to establish. However, weeds like henbit can still find their way into shaded areas or borders where our common warm-season grasses don’t grow as well. The use of fall applied pre-emergent herbicides is a good measure to prevent weed seeds from germinating when temperatures become optimal. Applications of pre-emergent herbicides after henbit has germinated may result in poor control. Once henbit has germinated, post-emergent applications of products such as Trimec, a 3-way blend of broadleaf specific herbicides, will yield better results. When applying these herbicides, be sure to follow the label for mixing and application instructions. Additionally, applications made after henbit has flowered will control the plant, but any seeds already made may require subsequent applications the following year.
2019 Landscape Symposium

Once again it is time for our annual **Landscape Symposium** in Stone County. The date is April 5, 2019, at the Gulf Coast Community College - Perkinston Campus, just off Highway 49 in Perkinston (straight up Highway 49 from the Coast). Registration begins at 8:30 a.m. The program starts at 9:00 a.m. Watch for the signs to get you to the campus and the correct building (student center building) on the campus. Mark the date and join us. Master Gardener training hours are available. Lunch is included. Program ends about 2:00 p.m.

Basic topics include: “The Benefits of Bees”; “Caring for Flower Arrangements”; “Flower Arranging”; “Growing Banana Trees”, and “Your Year-round Yard Needs”.

Pre-registration by March 22 is $10.00. Call the Extension office at 601-928-5286 to pre-register and pay at the door when you arrive. Registration after March 22 and on-site is $15.00. Make checks payable to Stone County Master Gardeners.

Just a “quick commercial” on this program. It began in 1998, and has continued every year to provide educational information on landscaping for “our part of the world” in terms of caring for the soil properly; growing plants, both native and non-native, that will survive and thrive; protecting our pollinators (bees and honey), utilizing the knowledge of both our community “experts”, as well as the Mississippi State Extension Service personnel, and getting answers to questions about horticulture, landscaping and land management. It is designed to provide pertinent information to our audiences from the Southern part of Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana who come to participate and learn.

Specific driving directions, coming either north or south on Highway 49 at Perkinston, follow the highway signs to Perkinston Campus, Gulf Coast Community College. Cross the 4-way stop and turn right onto the campus. Bear to the left, and the student center and cafeteria are on the right in the middle of the block. Parking is available in the lot on the right. You will see signs.

A special “thank you” goes out to all those who over the years have willingly contributed their knowledge and talents to the program. If you have any questions, or need some help getting to the campus location, call 601-928-5286 or 601-528-2720.