
DORMANT SPRAYS

What is dormant spray?

You may have heard this term before but what exactly does it mean? This is a generic term for any spray applied to deciduous trees during fall, winter, and early spring while the branches are still bare. There are many different products that can be used. It's more the timing which makes it a dormant spray.

What will dormant sprays treat?

Dormant sprays are used mainly on fruit trees. They help destroy insect eggs, over-wintering adults and hatching larvae. They can also kill fungal infestations that could spread in warmer weather and become much harder to control. Besides being one of the most effective options, spraying during the dormant season is the least disruptive to beneficial insects and the environment. For those that prefer organic gardening, many of our dormant sprays are also organic.

What are the different types of dormant spray?

There are three main kinds of dormant spray – Oils, Lime Sulfur, and Copper based sprays. The oils are used to treat insect pests, such as scale and aphids. Lime Sulfur is very effective against fungal diseases, such as leaf spot and powdery mildew. Copper based sprays are also effective fungal fighters and are a little more effective against bacterial problems than Lime Sulfur. In cases with known problem plants, two sprays like oil and lime sulfur for example, are often combined to give broad spectrum control of several problems.

When do you apply dormant spray?

In general, either a dormant spray application, a delayed-dormant spray application or a combination of the two are called for. Dormant spray must be used before the trees experience any spring growth. For us, this is usually between **November and March**. Delayed-dormant sprays are designed for use just after the buds begin to swell, but before the trees start to leaf out or flower. This usually occurs in **late March to early April**. Dormant oils should not be used when the tree is in flower, since they can be deadly to pollinators. Dormant sprays are especially effective against scale insects, mites, aphids, leaf curl and shot hole. Some issues, such as Peach leaf curl requires persistence in order to be effectively controlled. For these, you would treat several times during the dormant season, instead of just once.

Oils- The best time to spray for insects is early to mid-march, just before the trees begin to break out of dormancy.

Lime Sulfur- Spraying occurs throughout dormancy depending on what is being treated.

Copper- Spraying occurs throughout dormancy depending on what is being treated.

Apple codling moth and apple maggot are common issue in our area. This is a great example of how knowing what specifically you are trying to control can make your treatments effective, saving you time and money. Both of these issues are actually treated later on in the spring instead of with a dormant spray.