

# BEAUTY AND ORDER

JUNE 2015

## Fungus galore

I suppose it is my age, but I am coming to the realization that all events in this walk through life can be reduced to a collection of pluses and minuses. The observation is for every plus there is a minus, and we as humans can only hope for a collective net plus in the end.



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When I say end, I don't necessarily mean like the "end" end, although, I guess that could apply. But rather the end of a day, week, season, or year which yields what we grade as a "good" versus "bad" day, week or year.

We all know a bad day can still result in a good week, a good week can lead to a bad month, and so on.

Well, this "good" spring that has brought much needed rain to the area filling ponds, giving tree roots moisture lacking for some time, making lawns lush (and making our turf program appear genius), has produced a "bad" year in terms of fungal leaf diseases on a whole list of tree species. Spotted, discolored and shriveled leaves are falling like confetti from infected trees.

If unfamiliar with this cycle, spores from old leaves or alternate hosts are blown from a variety of different structures that only tree pathologists care to name (like me). These spores land on newly emerging delicate leaves and if the leaves are dry, the story pretty much ends there. However, if leaves are wet, the spore germinates, infecting the leaf



Photos by Randy James



**Clockwise (left to right):** Leaf spots on elm leaves; rust on pear leaves; leaf spot on crabapple leaves.

cell, and, when enough cells are mined, a visible spot is formed. If these spots coalesce, a blotch is formed; often the tree "decides" they are not worth the maintenance and sheds them. (I tend to give trees more intelligence than most.)

Some tree species are more vulnerable than others, and many we spray with a fungicide to reduce infection.

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tion this year.

Fortunately, most leaf spot fungi are considered cosmetic and do little harm in terms of long-term tree health as future "good" springs with less free-standing leaf moisture will limit infection. Good, I guess, unless you're a fungus, then it's a "bad" spring. Plus and minus every time.



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