

DORMANT SPRAYS

Farmington Gardens 21815 SW Farmington Rd, Beaverton 503.649.4568 www.farmingtongardens.com

What is dormant spray?

Dormant spray is used to prevent insects and diseases that can emerge in spring. It is applied in the winter months when the plant is no longer putting on growth and is dormant for the winter. Dormant spray can be one of the most beneficial things you can do for your trees and shrubs.

What will dormant sprays treat?

Dormant sprays can be used on most plants. There are different types of dormant sprays; some treat insect problems, while others are used to combat fungus and bacteria that can cause disease. The problem you are trying to treat will determine which product you use.

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.

What rates are dormant sprays applied at?

Dormant sprays aren't limited necessarily to the dormant season, that is just when they are most effective and therefore usually applied. There are different application rates for a dormant tree versus a growing tree. The concentration in the dormant season is double+ the rate used during the growing season – dormant concentrations would blow the leaves right off a tree, but are safe to use on a leafless tree. If applying dormant spray during the growing season, be sure not to apply during bloom times or when the temps are above 70 degrees as this can be extremely hazardous. It is very important to always read the label, as there are many different products, concentrations, and possible scenarios, and the application rates will vary accordingly.

When should I apply my dormant spray?

The best approach to dormant spray is to schedule 2-3 applications in the winter months, from December to late February or early March, depending on the weather. Towards mid-February, watch carefully for bud swelling so you can determine the proper application rate. Once the buds start swelling, this signifies the end of the dormant season. You will want to apply on a relatively dry day with no rain, so the product can stick without being washed off. Do not spray during bloom time as this can knock flower off trees along with beneficial insects, like bees.

How safe are dormant sprays for people?

Compared to most pesticides, very safe. This does not mean they are safe to ingest or play around with, but they are much less toxic than sprays that would be applied in the growing season, and are often more effective due to their timing. When applying, you should use the same precautions as with any other chemical.

Are there any potential problems?

A few things to keep in mind-

- Lime Sulfur is notorious for staining non-plant material, such as walkways, patios, roofs, etc. This will leave a green color that is difficult to remove.
- Be careful when spraying **evergreen plants**. They won't usually take the hefty concentrations that the deciduous plants will. The label will generally give a recommended rate for evergreen plants.....read the label!
- It generally isn't a great idea to spray a blue-colored conifer with an oil unless absolutely necessary. The oil will suck the blue color right out of the tree, leaving a very green tree until the new growth emerges next year.
- Don't spray on a hot or windy day at all, especially the oils. When oil gets hot, it turns into a vapor and drifts. On windy days, chemical gets blown all over. More damage is caused by chemical drift than a lot of people realize, so please do your part to prevent potential damage.
- Do not spray oils when the temperature dips below freezing.