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**A LITTLE BIT COUNTRY
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Canada Thistle/Leafy Spurge Top Weed Threats

This past March the Williams County Weed Board conducted a mail survey of landowners, users of the weed board's programs and township officials. One of the survey questions related to the threat of the weeds classified noxious in North Dakota. Canada thistle and leafy spurge attracted the greatest concern among the 136 respondents. A distant third was field bindweed. It has surprised me that officials have yanked field bindweeds from the state's noxious list. The county board does have the authority to add it to the county's list of noxious weeds.

Since its creation by the 1981 Williams County Commission, the weed board has focused its efforts on controlling noxious weeds along county and township right-of-ways and cost sharing control of leafy spurge on private land. During its March meeting, the weed board agreed to offer cost-sharing assistance of a new herbicide, Milestone, for Canada thistle control in non-cropland areas. Milestone provides excellent control on knapweeds, biennial and perennial thistles and yellow star thistle but goes easy on several species including many deciduous trees and shrubs.

The recommended rate of Milestone on Canada thistle is 5 to 7 fluid ounces per acre. The cost share program will provide up to one gallon per landowner with such landowner paying 40% of the herbicide cost. Only Milestone purchased through the weed board will be cost-shared. A total of 150 gallons will be available through this program in 2010. For more information about the cost-share of Milestone for Canada thistle control, contact Jim Basaraba, Williams County Weed Office at 701-572-4883.

Tree Leaf Drop

No one likes to see leaf drop this time of the year. Some of us have a very high emotional value for trees. Maybe it is because there are so few of them in this area compared to those our friends have in the eastern part of North Dakota. We also realize how long it takes a tree to grow to a point of providing shade and beauty to the landscape.

In biology class we learned that the purpose of leaves is to use their green tissue (chlorophyll) to produce food for the tree. Forestry experts tell me a tree can shed ten percent of its leaves and not be harmed. Mature trees can afford to lose more leaves than the younger ones. One year of above normal leaf drop early in the year is not likely to be too stressful. I think some of us tend to experience more stress from the leaf drop than the tree.

Most of the tree diseases are of the fungal type. Generally our low humidity and winds do not favor the development of fungal diseases. If they occur, the diseases are usually first found on the lower part of the tree which has more foliage and less exposure to wind and sun.

Many callers want to know what they can apply as either a protectant or treatment. If the disease is of the fungal type, there are some good fungicides available to the homeowner. In most cases a tree which cannot be treated with a hand sprayer from the ground is probably old enough to successfully fight off the disease. Application of most fungicides requires thorough coverage of the leaf surface. This is very difficult to achieve on trees above ten feet in height. With the bigger trees we often get more fungicide on ourselves than on the tree.

Most fungicides act as protectants and require regular (10 day intervals) application during moist weather. Rainfall also will wash-off the fungicide.

If your tree(s) experienced some leaf drop this past month, do not panic. It is likely to survive and the chance of a similar weather pattern occurring next year is low.