

Home & Garden

Black walnut roots a threat



By GEORGE ARAMIAN

Is there any truth to the idea that a black walnut tree near the vegetable garden will stunt or kill the plants? The answer is, yes.

Black walnut trees are highly prized for nuts and timber but are scorned near a vegetable garden.

Here are answers to some questions we have received about black walnuts:

Do the roots of the black walnut really secrete a poison?

Answer: Yes. The roots contain a phytotoxin (plant poison) called juglone. This compound is not secreted into the soil, but when susceptible plants touch the roots, injury occurs.

How far is the toxin zone?

Answer: The range is as far out as the spread of the root system, anywhere from 50 to 80 feet, and up to 80 feet.

What are the susceptible plants?

Answer: As far as we know, no one has put out a list yet. Highly susceptible plants include many evergreens, azaleas, rhododendrons, and many vegetables such as tomatoes, corn, potatoes, plus dozens of others.

How about sawdust, wood chips or

leaves from walnut trees? Are these safe to use?

Answer: Yes. Only the roots can exude poison. Roots must be alive.

After the tree has been cut down, is the soil poisonous to plants?

Answer: After the tree is killed and removed, no more juglone is made.

Would you recommend a black walnut tree on a small lot where vegetables are to be grown?

Answer: No, not if you're interested in raising vegetables. There are a few that tolerate juglone poisoning, and if any reader knows what they are, please send your information along.

MANY HOME GARDENERS find they get sweeter melons if they use Epsom salts on the vines. Commercial melon growers have found that flat, tasteless melons can be prevented by sweetening them up with a

dose of Epsom salts and borax.

The ideal way to spray your melons is when the vines start to run, and again when the fruits are between one and two inches in diameter. Field recommendations are to add four pounds of magnesium sulphate (Epsom salts) and two pounds of borax to 100 gallons of water.

For the home garden, this figures out to 6 1/2 tablespoons of Epsom salts and 3 1/2 tablespoons of borax (household type) to five gallons of water.

GREEN THUMB CLINIC: "I planted a peach tree this spring and it leaved off nicely. Now I notice a sticky substance coming from the trunk. Is this harmful?"

Answer: Yes, it's a sign of peach tree borer. Scrape off the gum ball and poke a wire into the hole in hopes of stinging the borer. Also spray the trunk with malathion.

Summer yard work for teens

For teenagers, the nation's energy crisis may seem remote. But chances are, they'll feel it in their own wallets this summer.

With job layoffs affecting a larger number of the adult population than usual, competition for summer and part-time jobs is stiffer than ever.

The average teenage boy needs a steady flow of cash to support his car, its insurance payments and gasoline. Money for dates is equally important.

Probably the surest source of income for a teenager is in the area of cleaning up. Just because his own room is a disaster area doesn't mean he can't clean up a neighbor's entire yard in an hour and a half, if there's money in it.

HE'LL NEED a rake, clippers, shovel, hoe and lawnmower. One motivated teenager, properly equipped, can clean up four or five yards a day.

He can afford to price himself under the going professional rate. In no time he should be able to line up enough regular customers to keep himself in gasoline and movies all summer. And start a little nestegg bank account.

Another much-needed service is taking care of a house while the owners are away, to discourage break-ins. Complete maintenance for an unoccupied house will include daily collection of mail and newspapers or circulars (unless stopped at the postoffice). Unexpected packages must be watched for and removed from the doorstep. Houseplants must be watered. (These can be left on the back porch or in some sheltered area).

The lawn and garden need to be watered regularly and moved often enough to stay tidy.

THE CARETAKER may be asked to take care of the owner's pets. In this case, he should walk any dogs for several days before the owner leaves town to be sure there are no personal problems.

He should have the phone number of the veterinarian.

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