



Lawn & Landscape Management

Tablets Simplify IPM Without
Sacrificing Performance

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Brian Haga doesn't agree with the phrase, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it."

As vice president of operations for Scientific Plant Service, Inc. (SPS) in Baltimore, Md., Haga is not content to just run business as usual. He is constantly searching for the latest products and most modern techniques to improve the health of the trees and lawns that he treats. "We're always looking for something new and different that can enhance our program," he says.



Brian Haga, Scientific Plant Service,
Baltimore, Md.

After 15 years in the lawn and tree care industry, Haga's expertise and desire to advance has grown along with SPS's business. Since its founding in 1957, the company has spread from the Baltimore metropolitan area to also service central Pennsylvania, northern Virginia and the entire Chesapeake Bay region. Haga joined SPS working summers during college and started full time upon graduating in 1995.

Haga explains that he does both single-treatment work as well as full annual programs for his mostly residential customer base. "We do IPM [integrated pest management] inspection and come out a couple of times a year to check things out. Spring is a lot of fungicide spraying for anthracnose and apple scab. But then again, we are also out there a lot in the fall," he says.

IPM at SPS

Responsible plant health care is the name of the game for Haga and his team. "That's the way it's always been for SPS," he says. For lawn care, he uses strictly granular fertilizers, and chooses not to tank mix broadleaf control products with fertilizers. For tree and shrub care, he only sprays where it's necessary with an IPM spot treatment. He incorporates soil drench and injection to further reduce the amount of spraying he does. "We just prefer to do those things," he says.

Most recently, Haga is using his IPM techniques to treat trees and shrubs for the lacebugs and scale insects that are creeping up all over Maryland. "With the humidity and the weather in the transition zone, we seem to get everything here – they are plentiful in this area," Haga explains. "It's just warm enough in the summer, and it's not cold enough in the winter."

Conifers, specifically hemlocks, are the trees most often infested. In the spirit of IPM, Haga prefers to make applications directly into the ground during treatment. He mostly uses soil drenches, but recently started incorporating CoreTect™ tree and shrub tablets from Bayer Environmental Science, a division of Bayer CropScience LP, to rid the plants of these invasive pests.

The Latest and Greatest

Haga knows that staying on the forefront of trends in this industry means embracing sustainability, as he demonstrates with his IPM inspections. Top players in the industry have a similar mentality, which is reflected in the new products they are developing.

“We’re constantly changing our lawn care programs as well as our tree and shrub programs. We definitely don’t do the same old, same old,” Haga says

After receiving sample tablets of CoreTect and learning about the product’s convenience and efficacy at the Green Industry & Equipment Expo, Haga experimented on hemlock trees and azaleas in the area that needed attention, “and it just went from there,” he adds.

CoreTect tablets were developed for use on new and established residential and commercial ornamental trees and shrubs for insect control while providing some stress tolerance and improved plant growth. Formulated with 20 percent imidacloprid, the same active ingredient in MERIT® insecticide from Bayer Environmental Science, the tablet form makes it easy for technicians to apply the product directly to the soil. CoreTect is also designed with a slow, controlled release for extended insect control.

Haga’s technicians keep the tablets on their trucks and apply it for ornamental programs to complement the IPM treatments, and to avoid some of the perceived environmental stigmas associated with spray applications. “We love CoreTect,” Haga says. “It’s one more tool in the truck – something the technicians can carry. There have been instances when it has generated on-the-spot billable service with very little labor – nothing special, just a screwdriver and a tablet the size of a gumball.”

The Proof Is in the Pyracantha

Reduced labor isn’t the only reason Haga is singing the praises of CoreTect. He has seen firsthand the turnaround of a dying plant. Recently, a customer in the Baltimore area was confronted with a dying pyracantha plant that seemed to suffer from no specific insect problems. Without an exact diagnosis, Haga took a chance and tested out the CoreTect by depositing tablets into the soil beneath the plant. Within a few months, he noticed larger, healthier leaves as well as more vibrant berries. “It was just struggling, so we experimented to find the best solution and it really brought it around,” he says.

To test the progress, Haga left a control bush next to the treated one. The clear differences can be seen in figures 1.1 and 2.1. While the berries on the untreated bush continued to shrivel and the leaves wilted, the neighboring bush produced healthy leaves and vibrant berries.

All of that, using nothing special – just a screwdriver and CoreTect.