

# Commonly Asked Questions

**1. What zone are we in?**

Zone 4, or if you have a protected area, Zone 5.

**2. What is the 1<sup>st</sup> & last frost date?**

The average last frost date is the week of May 22<sup>nd</sup>. The first average frost is the week of September 12<sup>th</sup>.

**3. What is making the leaves curl on my trees?**

Aphids are most likely the culprit! The least toxic option is to spray with insecticidal soap, or insecticidal soap plus neem. Check the Plant Data Base at [www.co.missoula.mt.us/extension/plantdata](http://www.co.missoula.mt.us/extension/plantdata) for further information.

**4. What causes the worms in my apples?**

The codling moth caterpillar enters the flesh of apples and feeds inside the fruit. Timing & repeat applications are necessary for control. Check the pest alert hotline (258-3820) for timing and sprays.

**5. What is the whitish substance covering the leaves of my plant?**

Powdery mildew occurs when humidity is high at night followed by warm days. Keep leaves DRY. See Plant Data Base for control options – [www.co.missoula.mt.us/extension/plantdata](http://www.co.missoula.mt.us/extension/plantdata)

**6. What are the poisonous spiders in Montana?**

Only two poisonous spiders that present a danger in terms of their bite occur in western Montana: the Aggressive House (Hobo) spider and the Black Widow spider.

**7. When do I prune my Trees & shrubs?**

Pruning maximizes growth, health, flower, and fruit production. Pruning at the right time is the key and varies...depending on the plant. See Fact sheet #7 Is it time to Prune?

**8. Are ants eating my plants?**

No! Different species of ants have various food habits. Some like sweet materials and others like seeds, grease or protein-rich foods. Ants are common and tremendous numbers are found in the average yard. Most ant activity is unobserved but considered useful in controlling pest insects, weed seeds, and improving soils by nest building. Ants can cause a nuisance problem in unwanted areas. Ants also are commonly associated with aphids and other honeydew producing insects. The ants collect and feed on the sweet, sticky honeydew that these insects excrete. In turn, ants protect these pest insects from attack by lady beetles and other natural enemies. Mixing boric acid with something sweet like honey or jelly mixed with peanut butter is a common bait to control ants. (Approximately 1 tsp of boric acid per cup of the food bait)

**9. How do I control dandelions in my yard?**

If you're patient, try the integrated approach. See fact sheet # 8 Managing Lawn Weeds.

<http://missoulaeduplace.org/test/docs/FactSheet8ManagingLawnWeeds.pdf>

For quicker dandelion control, try herbicides containing the following active ingredients: 2,4-D amines, MCPA, MCPP or combinations of these ingredients. These herbicides only control broadleaf weeds, not harming the lawn grass. The most effective time to spray is early, before bloom(April) or after a hard frost in the fall(September). Treat individual plants or patches of weeds. Be careful of spraying around the drip line of trees & shrubs. Follow manufacturer's recommendations on rates.

**10. How much do I need to water my trees and shrubs?**

Water requirements are affected by species, micro-site and type of irrigation. Exotic shade trees require an average of 30 to 40 inches of precipitation per year. Water wise species can lower moisture requirements immensely. Short, frequent watering may encourage shallow, surface roots. Tree roots generally extend over twice the diameter of the crown. 80-90% of the water uptake happens in the fine root hairs in the top 30 inches of soil. Water the entire area under the tree canopy and thoroughly soak to encourage the development of deep roots. Water less frequently (weekly) for several hours.