

Plant Health Care Recommendations for Mountain Laurel

Mountain laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*) is a popular native broadleaf evergreen shrub which is widely used in shrub borders and natural areas. Mountain laurel is highly prized for its flowers in mid-to-late spring and its attractive foliage. More than forty-five varieties of mountain laurel have been selected based primarily on flowering characteristics or foliage traits.



Mountain laurel is closely related to Rhododendron and azalea and have similar cultural requirements and share many of the same pest problems. Mountain laurel requires acid, well drained soils. Root disease and nutrient deficiencies typically occur on poorly drained or alkaline soils. Mt. laurel is quite tolerant of shade but flowering is most profuse where there is sun for part of the day. On exposed sites, foliage desiccation can occur especially during winter.



Common foliage feeding pests include lacebugs, weevils and foliage feeding caterpillars. Lacebugs feed by removing sap from cells resulting in a speckled leaf appearance. Weevils and caterpillars remove notches in the blade margins which severely disfigures the leaf. Scale insects and borers occasionally infest branches and stems of Mt. laurel.

Leaf spots caused by the fungus *Cerospora* significantly reduce the attractiveness of the foliage and may cause defoliation. Leaf spot disease is severe on laurels grown in dense shade and with sprinkler irrigation which frequently wets the foliage. *Phytophthora* root disease causes decline and death of *Kalmia* especially on wet, poorly drained sites.

Mountain Laurel is seldom damaged significantly by deer. Rodents may feed on stem tissue in winter especially if mulch is against the root crown.

Recommended Monitoring for Mountain Laurel

Timing	Treatment
Late Winter	Sample soil for nutrient and pH levels especially if deficiency symptoms are present. If plants exhibit decline, sample roots add additional mulch to root zone as needed.
Early Spring	Apply fungicide soil treatment on plants with <i>Phytophthora</i> root trap for monitoring borers.
Mid Spring	Apply second fungicide spray to suppress leaf spot disease. Inspect for lacebug, weevils, caterpillar defoliators and borers. Treat as needed. Apply fertilizers and soil amendments to adjust pH as needed.
Late Spring	Apply third fungicide spray to suppress leafspot disease. Inspect minimize water stress and prevent root disease.
Early Summer	Inspect for lacebug and weevils Treat as needed. Corrective prune plants after blooming. Inspect irrigation and soil moisture levels to minimize water stress and prevent root disease.
Mid Summer	Monitor for lacebug and weevils. Treat as needed. Corrective treatment on plants with <i>Phytophthora</i> root rot.
Late Summer	Monitor for lacebug and weevils. Treat as needed. Corrective
Late Fall	Apply fertilizer and soil treatments to adjust pH as needed. Erect stems to reduce risk of rodent injury and <i>Phtotophthora</i> root disease.

¹Leaf spot treatments should be applied to plants with a history of this disease.