



Topic: Sap Flow from Myer Lemon

Q: We've had a Meyer Lemon tree for about four years. We just noticed a really sappy situation at the trunk of the tree. See attached photo. From my searches on the Internet, I thought it might be foot rot or some fungus related issue. I've twice sprayed the surrounding ground and trunk of the tree with Liquid Copper Fungicide, but the sap is still flowing at the same rate. Should I continue this treatment weekly? If so, should I also spray the leaves and branches? Or, could it be something else entirely? I'd really hate to lose the tree and would appreciate any advice you might have for me.

A: The problem is broadly called gummosis because of the sap, gum, flowing from the tree. There are two possible pathogens that can cause this disease: a fungus or a virus. Phytophthora is the fungus that can cause oozing of sap from cracks in the infected bark. When this happens, the disease is normally referred to as foot rot as the symptom occurs on the lower trunk. However, it appears that sap from your tree originates above the trunk and therefore this might be the viral form of the disease. If so, there is no cure for a viral infection.

Further, whether caused by a fungus or a virus, the disease can be spread from one tree to another by the use of uncleaned pruning tool. Copper fungicide is the treatment for Phytophthora foot rot. Be sure you remove any flaking bark before copper application. A response will take several weeks and although the tree is usually saved, it will not recover any lost bark. Only the trunk and lower branches need to be sprayed and there is no point spraying the ground. One or perhaps two applications are all that will be needed. Excess copper can be toxic to plants. Read and follow label directions.



Stephen Brown is a horticulture agent with the Lee County Extension Service. Submit questions by calling the horticulture desk at (239) 533-7504 between 9 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. or by sending an email to brownsh@leegov.com 12/31/2011