

ask

the landscape professional

Linda K. Lillie of Sprigs & Twigs



Welcome to my weekly series!

Feel free to send me questions you'd like to have me answer and I will do my best to address the ones of most general interest.

Email or mail your questions to: info@sprigsandtwigs.net or

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Question of the Week: *We have lived in East Lyme for 26 years. Since the house was built, it was always surrounded by beautiful Mountain Laurel. That was, until the last five or six years, when the Mountain Laurel started dying off. Now there are very few left. Some were almost two inches thick at the base and most are about twelve feet tall. Why are the Mountain Laurels dying? ...Vinnie*

Answer: Assuming that there is no apparent disease present, here are a few thoughts about what might be happening.

1 The existing tree canopy above the Mountain Laurel may be too thick and not allowing enough sunlight. If this is the case, Sprigs & Twigs can remove or thin some of the tree limbs. When major storms knock down trees in the forest, creating openings for sunlight, Mountain Laurels respond very favorably by growing more vigorously.

2 The surrounding tree roots may be competing for soil moisture. Mountain Laurels have shallow root systems so they easily dry out if surrounded by large trees or during a drought. Sprigs & Twigs can remove any larger trees directly around the Mountain Laurel. Also, make sure the fallen leaves remain on the ground under the laurels each year. The leaves provide a protective barrier to keep the roots cool and moist, and they also decompose to provide nourishment and organic matter for the shrubs.

3 The stand of Mountain Laurel may be too thick and inhibiting proper air circulation through the shrub's branches. When a shrub's overall branch structure is thick and heavy, a perfect moist, dark environment is created for diseases like Leaf Spot to get established and insects like Lace Bug and Borers to take up residence. If this is the case, Sprigs & Twigs can thin the Mountain Laurel to open up the branch structure.

4 Deer may be browsing on the lower limbs and removing the leaves which are important in collecting sunlight and providing the nutrients for the shrub to grow. A fence of fishing line could be erected around the laurels to deter the deer.

5 The soil may not be acidic enough. Sprigs & Twigs can test the soil and advise you how to correct it.

Sprigs & Twigs is scheduling appointments now for Fall Garden Close-downs, Fall Leaf Clean-ups and 2015 Garden Design. Call us for to discuss your landscape project.

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Linda K. Lillie is the President of Sprigs & Twigs, Inc, the premier landscape tree care & lawn care company in SE Connecticut for the last 19 years. She is a graduate of Connecticut College in Botany, a Connecticut Master Gardener and a national award winning landscape designer for her design and installation work.

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