



## Late fall sprays

Posted by [Josh Willis](#)

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[Josh Willis](#)


[Late fall sprays](#)

November 15, 2022 11:32PM

Registered: 6 years ago

Posts: 134

Ok team, how late can a late fall spray go? We're running behind quite a bit on our fall spray to promote biological activity. Temps here in Maryland are now in the 40's to 50's during the day, and 20's at night. If we spray some neem, fish oil, and EM-1, is anything biological going to be awake enough to have that spray do any good? Or will it wake up on the warmer days, and better to spray something rather than skip it?

As usual, it seems I am exploring the limits of "not optimal." 

Earthworks

Zone 7a in West-Central MD

Non-commercial, ~100 fruit trees, dwarf to MM106

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[Steve Dagger](#)

[Re: Late fall sprays](#)

November 16, 2022 06:02PM

Registered: 9 years ago

Posts: 28

I have the same question, Josh, so thanks for posing it to the forum.

In my part of the intermountain west we got early cold and snow cover and many of my trees still have green and partially colored leaves on them. It seems like a fall dormant spray will be impractical this year and probably not effective anyway. Not an unusual occurrence in my experience.

[Pommes de Terre Acres](#)

USDA Zone 5 - Dixon, Montana

Intermountain West Region

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[Mike Biltonen](#)

[Re: Late fall sprays](#)

November 19, 2022 02:48AM

Registered: 11 years ago

Posts: 298

Yo! So from where I sit, the beautiful thing is that nature is quite adaptable. Even in cold temps - if not, how long could it have survived this long? Will these sprays have the same effect as if sprayed in September or during warmer temps? Will they do anything at all? Who knows?

First, the neem is a seed oil and so good at doing many different things - including the FAK. Second, the fish oil gives the tree (at a minimum) a nutritional boost to provide more cytoplasmic antifreeze going into winter. At best it provides a nutritional boost to the microbes. But if it provides anything to microbes is another question - maybe, maybe not this late in the season. The EM-1 is the questionable one - will it survive, does it do any good? My take is that yes it will. The effect may be marginal (compared to warmer temps) but it can't hurt.

In the end, it never hurts to do this spray. I would add Cueva and leave out Em1 if you are looking for more of an FAK effect, but in the end it never hurts and only helps to boost the beneficial microbial base layer going into winter.

[Mike Biltonen, Know Your Roots](#)

Zone 5b in New York

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[Steve Dagger](#)

[Re: Late fall sprays](#)

November 19, 2022 08:53PM

Registered: 9 years ago

Posts: 28

Thanks Mike; your 'take' makes sense to me. I think for my local situation I am going to have to rethink timing of my fall spray regime. I am normally harvesting my main fruit varieties from late Sept. thru late October and most of the trees typically have not begun a real slide into dormancy yet when early cold and sometimes snow makes spraying physically impractical. Integrating a fall spray during harvesting might make more sense for me. My operation is small enough I can probably work around any conflicts and it does seem that my trees need a 'cytoplasmic antifreeze boost' given that early and late cold have set fruit bud production back all too often in my orchard blocks.

[Pommes de Terre Acres](#)

USDA Zone 5 - Dixon, Montana

Intermountain West Region

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[Josh Willis](#)

[Re: Late fall sprays](#)

January 04, 2023 08:42PM

Registered: 6 years ago

Posts: 134

Thanks, all, for your comments. Sounds like it's generally good, but how much it is worth the time is still an open question, at least so far as encouraging microbial activity. Maybe there is some science out there on what temps microbial life grows at, but I couldn't find it. If I judge by my sourdough, they aren't even growing slowly until above 50-60° F. But "microbial" is a wonderfully broad and diverse category beyond sourdough bacillus and yeast! So who knows.

The irony, of course, is that here in MD we've had the earliest deep frost, ~10° F, in memory, followed by temps in the 60's for a couple weeks. So as our formerly zone 6 slides more and more into zone 7 territory, I'd agree with Mike that it seems well worth it, at least notionally.

As I reviewed Mike's comments in the FAK discussion, and thank you for your posts which are always brimming with details!, I was reminded that the fall FAK and EM-1 sprays can occur a bit earlier than I thought. I was holding out for the tail end of leaf drop, but you mentioned starting as early as 50% leaf drop, if I recall correctly, which would certainly help with the timing.

Does this mean we are not worried about increased oil application on fruits still hanging on the tree? Both in terms of fruit health, aside from possible russetting, and in terms of oil residue, which could just be rinsed off?

Earthworks

Zone 7a in West-Central MD

Non-commercial, ~100 fruit trees, dwarf to MM106

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