

Handy Tools for Scouting
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One way to keep your landscape healthy is to scout regularly, looking for problems. If caught early, insect and disease damage can frequently be minimized. We've made a list of good things to have on hand when we're out scouting the grounds for insects and diseases.

- A good hand lens or magnifier is imperative. Personally we use a 16x doublet which means it magnifies 16 times and is composed of two lenses. Lens quality is important. Don't skimp on a cheap plastic lens. A 10 power lens used to be fine, but at our age, 16 power works a little better. If using a doublet (two lenses screwed together), it's not a bad idea to place tape around the magnifier. In the past, we've had the doublet become unscrewed and we lose one of the lenses. We keep ours on a shoestring around our neck. That way it's always there when we need it. We never leave home without it.
- Plastic bags to keep samples in and a sharpie to label what's in the plastic bag.
- A good hand pruner to cut samples.
- A spray bottle of disinfectant to spray the pruners after each cut. We want to be sure not to spread diseases to other plants.
- A notebook and pen to write down what we're seeing. At our age, we can't rely on our memory for much. Better to write it down and hope we remember where we put the notebook.
- A trowel to see how wet or dry soil is.
- A small knife to scrape bark off to check for wilt diseases such as Verticillium.
- Good reference material is imperative, but most of it is too heavy to carry around. However, one book we recommend for scouting is *A Pocket Scouting Guide for Woody Landscape Plants*, compiled and edited by Diane Brown-Rytlewski and published by Michigan State University. The guide is small enough to slip into a pocket, is plastic coated, and covers many common diseases and insects on woody plants in our area.