

For: September Garden Q&A:

From: Jim Chatfield

Q. – Lois R. , Cleveland

A. – The insects pictured are dogwood sawfly larvae (*Macremphytus tarsatus*). Though damage may appear deadly, the leaf-feeding is late in the season (leaves are about to senesce anyway) and overall effects on plant health are typically minimal, though they may make the plant look unsightly in their late-season garb. In early larval stages this insect looks like an orangish caterpillar, but later become covered with white powdery material that when curled up looks a lot like bird droppings.

Sawfly larvae are only “like” caterpillars, but are not really, as Almanac readers should remember. Sawflies are Hymenpteran insects, related to wasps, bees and ants, and not Lepidopteran insects, the larvae of which are caterpillars, the immatures of butterflies and moths. You can tell this, because sawfly larvae have 6-8 pairs of prolegs, the stubby little “legs” posterior to the three pairs of true legs all insects have, unlike true Lepidoteran caterpillars that have 4-5 pairs of prolegs.

This can matter relative to selection of insecticides, though this is generally not necessary. Sawfly larvae are easily controlled by imidacloprid insecticide; caterpillars are not. Caterpillars are controlled with Bt bioinsecticides; sawfly larvae are not. Dogwood sawflies also cause damage other than to dogwoods. Prior to winter they sometimes bore out an overwintering chamber into redwood siding and outdoor furniture.

Q. – *Doing the garden, digging the weeds, who could ask for more?
Will you still need me, will you still feed me, when I'm sixty-four?*

- Jim C., Doylestown

A. - John, Paul, George, Ringo, and moi. Yes, that was, in part, my question in last week's *Plant Lover's Almanac*. I did indeed mark my 64th birthday this past Sunday, and yes, I am “losing my hair” though at the same time I am growing it ever more, up and out, my sole connection to Albert Einstein. Come to think of it, my middle name is Albert! So, last week's riddle referred to the Lennon and McCartney song. Speaking of the Beatles, Japanese and otherwise, Apple Records, my own connection to the Little Apple (crabapple), Yoko Ono and her home in the Big Apple, and, well, go out this weekend and every day to wonderful local orchards and make thyself healthy. It is the Season of the Apple – and that most wondrous elixir: apple cider.

And in two weeks: the winners of the Hobbiton prize to the first three winners of last week's riddle will be publicly announced; correct callers and e-mailers started pouring in quite early last Saturday morning. The winners will receive something far better than the apple Sam Gamgee beaned Bill Ferny with as Aragorn and the hobbits left Bree.