
COMMON TREE INSECT PROBLEMS

The Urban Forestry Branch recognizes that certain insect pests are very commonly found in association with ornamental trees and may cause a variety of concerns. The following information briefly describes the most common problems. Further information on specific situations can be obtained by contacting agencies that are directly involved with insect control.

Common Problems

1. **Spring and Fall Cankerworms:** found on most deciduous trees and shrubs. The larvae feed in spring, often defoliating the trees and shrubs on which they feed. They drop from the foliage when disturbed and hang from silken threads. Larvae range in colour from green to brown. As the female adult moth is wingless, a band of tanglefoot placed around the tree in September and replenished in late March/early April aids in their control.
2. **Aphids:** very small soft bodied insects that can be found in great numbers on various plants. Damage to foliage is often noted as leaf curling or galls. On larger trees, the feeding of aphids causes a sticky, sugary exudate to drop from the trees, often causing minor problems on sidewalks, fences, lawn furniture and vehicles.
3. **Ash Flower Gall Mite:** tiny mites that feed on blooms of male ash trees during blossom time. The damage is noted as black masses hanging from the tree later in the season. This problem is unsightly but rarely damaging.
4. **Scale Insects:** common on evergreens, maple, ash, elm and cotoneaster twigs or leaves. Can appear as white flecks, oyster shell or brown shiny lumps. The small insects live under the shells and only emerge for a short period in the crawler stage. In great numbers, these insects can cause branches to dry out or die.
5. **Leaf Miners:** damage is caused to leaves by a flattened larva about ¼" in length. The larvae feed between the upper and lower surfaces of leaves causing a hollow tunnel, which may eventually dry out the leaf. Severe infestations may cause most of the leaf area of the tree to become semi-transparent. Repeated severe attacks may kill the tree.
6. **Spruce Bud Worm:** larvae most commonly feed on White Spruce and Balsam Fir causing damage to old needles, unopened buds and expanding buds. The needles are usually clipped at the base and webbed together. Heavy feeding damage gives the tree a scorched appearance.