

Insect Activity

Fall Cankerworm



You may have noticed small gray moths flying at dusk and early evening in the last few weeks. These are male fall cankerworms. They are seeking out the females, who are wingless. The cankerworm moths have recently emerged from pupation in the soil. If you had an infestation of cankerworm this spring, look for females crawling on the side of your house or on tree trunks. The female will lay her eggs on small twigs, and die soon after egg-laying. Adults continue emergence until early December.

Poplar Twig-Gall Fly



As aspen and poplar leaves drop, the galls formed by the twig-gall fly will become noticeable. The adult female lays her eggs

within newly forming stems in spring, and the larvae feed and overwinter within the galls. Many of the galls will continue to swell after the insect has emerged, and appear as swollen bands around larger limbs or trunk.

Aphids

Aphids are laying eggs in protected sites on their hosts. A dormant oil application in early spring will smother many of these eggs. Monitor for egg hatch in spring.

Western Conifer Seed Bug

The western conifer seed bug is moving into homes and sheltered locations for the winter. They spend this time in a semi-dormant state, and do not cause harm to humans or structures. They will give off a pungent odor when handled.



In spring, adult western conifer seed bugs feed on developing seeds and young flowers of a variety of conifers. Young nymphs feed on needles and green cones all summer until maturity. There is one generation per summer.

Soft Scales

If you look at twigs and notice large “bumps” that weren’t there before, you may be seeing newly migrated soft scale nymphs. Starting in late summer and continuing through early fall, nymphs of several species of soft scales leave their feeding sites on the leaves and move

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to woody stems and twigs for the remainder of their lives. Once settled, they darken in color, and molt to 2nd instar nymphs, increasing in size by three-fold. They can be treated with dormant oil in early spring. Coverage of the entire tree is essential.

Cooley spruce gall adelgid

At this time, newly hatched fundatrices (overwintering females) have migrated to the base of buds on which to spend the winter. If you have a problem with this pest, early November is a good time to apply dormant oil on your Colorado spruce. (Do not spray oil on actively growing trees or needle burn will result.) Keep in mind that oil sprays on blue spruce can turn the needles green. The blue color returns with the flush of new growth in spring.



Disease Activity

DECIDUOUS TREES

Slime Flux



Slime flux occurs when a large population of naturally-occurring bacteria builds within a tree, causing gases to form. The resulting pressure creates an ooze of sap through cracks or bark. Other bacteria feed on the sap, creating a frothy, smelly discharge that stains the bark. Several trees are susceptible, but some more than others such as the globe willow, locust, ash, elm, and cottonwood. Most trees can survive fine with this condition, but some (in particular globe willow) may show symptoms of decline.

Because the bacteria exist inside the tree, it is almost impossible to eradicate. If the sap is flowing from a stem, prune out the stem. You can also cut the bark away from the oozing site

in an elliptical shape, and apply a 5% solution of bleach. If the oozing is originating from a main crotch of the tree, there may be no other alternative than tree removal.

Leaf Spots, Sycamore Anthracnose



Be sure to rake up and throw out all leaves from trees that had leaf spots or anthracnose. The fungi that cause these diseases overwinter in the leaves and spread to new growth in the spring. If raking is not feasible, mow with a mulching lawn mower weekly for several weeks in a row and then irrigate to stimulate the rapid breakdown of the leaf tissue.

EVERGREEN TREES

Needle Drop of Conifers

If you see yellowing of the interior needles of pine trees, do not be alarmed—this is normal leaf shedding that occurs each fall. Foliar shedding on evergreens is a slower process than with deciduous trees, occurring over a period of several months. Drought or other stresses during the growing season will cause more needle drop than “normal” years.

Browning and needle loss on the current season’s growth may indicate a disease or extreme stress such as lack of or too much water.



Normal shedding of pine needles



Purple-colored spruce needles can indicate drought stress.

Kansas State University Research and Extension

Stresses of Spruces

Late summer is when drought stress of spruces, especially Colorado blue spruce, is quite evident. Needles of the current season drop, and remaining needles turn brown. Spruces are shallow-rooted trees, and are sensitive to inadequate growth conditions. Some of the following could be a cause:

1. **Watering:** Examine your watering schedule to see if the tree is getting too much or too little water. Both situations can cause similar symptoms. Also, determine if the soil is poorly drained. Waterlogged soils can suffocate roots.

2. **Needle burn from reflective surfaces:** Is the tree near a reflective surface such as an asphalt drive or building? This can cause needle burn and stress.
3. **Soil compaction:** Driveways, sidewalks, construction, or heavy traffic on the root system can result in a slow decline. If the soil cannot be aerated and the source of compaction alleviated, the tree may need to be removed.

Keep in mind that the problem could also be caused by an infectious fungal disease or bark beetle. When in doubt, send a sample to the Utah Plant Pest Diagnostic Lab. Information can be found at

<http://utahpests.usu.edu/upddl/>.

Cultural Practices

Watering and Fertilizing

Roots of woody plants are actively growing in the fall, even after leaf drop, and will continue to grow and absorb nutrients as long as the soil temperature is above 40 degrees F. Therefore, it is essential that trees and shrubs have adequate watering through the fall. Apply fertilizers when all above-ground growth has ceased but before mid-November. Make sure all new plantings and all evergreens get one last soaking of water before the ground freezes. The watering will particularly help to prevent desiccation of evergreens.

Planting

Fall is a great time for planting, up to approximately mid-November. Plants need about five weeks of soil temperature above 40 degrees to get established. They will increase their root size significantly, and emerge in spring with a great start.

Soil Prep

Healthy plants start with healthy soil:

- Spread a layer of compost over your vegetable and flower gardens and let it sit until spring. It will slowly work its way into the soil.
- Collect soil samples for nutrient analysis, and amend in fall or spring.
- Apply mulch on bare soil; shredded leaves, pine needles, and straw are good alternatives to bark mulch.
- Till new beds in fall when the soil is drier. Wet tilling in spring creates lumps in the soil that don't break up.