

Summer Tree Pests

By Dave Falkenham, UNHCE Grafton County Forester

Grafton County has a very high diversity of tree species and conversely we also have a high diversity of forest pests (insects and diseases) that love to feed on, infest and make homes in our beloved trees. Many of these pests are native. Over the centuries the trees have evolved with these pests, and have built up some defenses against the invaders. The infestations often result in leaf damage or total defoliations, however, in many cases the trees will re-foliate and bounce back and grow normally next year. Some trees that are stressed by other factors, such as poor drainage or bad planting practices, may not survive such infestations. Many of these pests are also cyclical in nature and if they are bad this year, chances are they won't be as bad next year. Eastern tent caterpillars and the dreaded gypsy moth caterpillar are classic examples of this.

You may have noticed that the foliage on some of the oaks in Grafton County looks damaged. This is known as the oak leaf roller complex. It is called a complex because there are actually two or three insects that feed on and lay their eggs in the leaves of red oak. This results in some defoliation, the severity of which depends on the location. Some mortality may occur in nutrient poor sites. This situation is being monitored by Vermont and New Hampshire forest health officials. The common belief now is that this is a native species and the majority of the trees will bounce back from the defoliations.

Another situation is the severe discoloration of many of the pines in Grafton County. Roadside pines are always affected and often die from road salt deposition however this year many pine sites have been sampled and a needle cast fungus has been identified. This needle cast is normally harmless (just ugly) and is a likely result of the wet weather we have been having. Provided that the remainder of the summer, and the early fall, is dry, this problem should clear up with minimal mortality.

Some species of insect are highly damaging and can cause a lot of mortality in trees. Many of these species are not native and arrived here from "across the pond". One such species of insect that we should be on the lookout for is the Asian Longhorned Beetle (ALB).

The ALB arrived in the US from Asia in solid wood packing material, mostly in pallets and crates used to transport goods. The insect is a serious threat to deciduous hardwood trees especially all species of maple. During its larval stage the ALB bores deep into a tree's heartwood, this tunneling action damages and eventually kills the tree. The ALB has been found in Brooklyn and other parts of the greater New York City area, suburbs of New Jersey, Toronto, Ontario and of course in Worcester, Massachusetts. The outbreak in Worcester is the largest to date, and containment efforts are underway. At the moment, ALB has not been found in New Hampshire however we all need to be prepared to correctly identify this insect.

Understand that the ALB has an imposter known as the Whitespotted Sawyer Beetle. The Whitespotted Sawyer is common to this area and does not pose a significant threat, however it is often mistaken for ALB. Here's how to tell the difference: Both beetles are 1 to 1 1/2 inches long with very long segmented antennae. The ALB is **glossy** black with very distinct white spots, the Whitespotted Sawyer is **bronzy** black or **dusty** black and the white spots are not as distinct. Also, on the Whitespotted Sawyer, at the base of the beetles' neck, between the wings and the neck is a small white spot. The ALB does not have this spot. So if the beetle you find has a white spot at the base of its neck, it is very likely the harmless Whitespotted Sawyer beetle. (Remember, good guys always wear white.) Also the Whitespotted Sawyer is found in or around dead and dying conifers, particularly white pine, while the ALB is strictly a lover of deciduous trees, particularly maple.

If you have any questions regarding the identification of a beetle, feel free to contact me at the Grafton County UNHCE office at 787-6944 or dave.falkenham@unh.edu. If you want to learn more about the Asian Longhorned Beetle visit our website at www.extension.unh.edu.

I will discuss more insects and diseases next month, but for the time being understand that the spread of many insects, including ALB, is often caused by the transportation of campfire wood. If you are going to be camping please purchase or collect your firewood in the state you are visiting and do not bring the extra back to New Hampshire. State and Federal campgrounds are no longer allowing firewood from out of state to be used at their campgrounds.

Look for next week's column from 4-H Educator Kathleen Jablonski.