

What's Bugging the Trees

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This is the time of year to start watching out for insect damage on plants. Aphids suck the fluid out of leaves and can be a very serious problem for many broadleaf plants. Aphid damage makes the plant look very unattractive by turning the leaves brown. The aphids get on the underneath side of a leaf and cause the leaf to curl makes them difficult to control. If they are not controlled, they could stress the plant and eventually the plant could die. Other signs of aphids are their sticky deposits on the cars parked underneath the tree and shiny sticky leaves on the plant, this "honey dew" is what the ants are after if you see them on plants.

Spider Mites are another sucking insect that feed on our trees and shrubs. They are so small I usually use a piece of white paper, holding it under the branch, shaking the branch and checking the paper for the small red specks, to move. To Control spider mites us insecticidal soap or a miticide, regular insecticides will not work.

Scale insects look like bumps on the branch of trees, if you press on them and they squish, then you have scales. Scales suck the sap out of the stems. Regular insecticides do not work, so use insecticidal soaps or horticulture oils, read the label, as some oils are harmful to evergreens.

Slugs can be a problem. One of the best things in slug control is to remove old decaying vegetable material, boards, debris or any place they can hide. They must have a moist place to survive. They die if exposed to the sun for very long. Slug bait can be purchased at garden supply stores. There are several non-chemical methods available such as picking them up, using salt (but be careful over a long period of time salt can build up in the soil and can cause problems), wood ashes can work (same caution as salt). Keeping plant leaves and fruit away from the soil will help. Letting the surface dry out occasionally will also help discourage them.

Leaf miners are a group of insects whose larvae feed in the leaf. If you look at a leaf and see a road map, running across it but tissue on both sides, look closely and you may see a small worm like insect. They seem to be affecting lots of trees this year. Use a Systemic for control.

I have seen evidence of Ash tree borers in Sheridan, look for the shed skin coming out of a small hole in the trunk of your ash tree, or a hole the size of a 22 bullet. As with any tree borer, the use of a systemic insecticide and or the spraying of Sevin on the trunk of the tree are recommended.

For general insect control, such as spiders, ants, millipedes, boxelder bugs etc., use a contact insecticide around the foundation, doors and windows in the spring and fall and this will keep them out of the house most of the year. Tempo is a very safe and effective insecticide, which can be used inside or outside the house.

Be on the alert for insects that are damaging to your plants generally early detection will mean better control and less damage to the plant. Be sure the infestation is damaging before starting a spray program. There are several control methods such as BT, insecticidal soap, beneficial insects available for naturally controlling insects. There are many insect sprays available both contact and systemic, and of these the systemic sprays last longer and have less effect on beneficial insects and many can be applied to the soil and the roots pick up the chemical.

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