

# Pest Update (April 9, 2014)

Vol. 12, no. 5

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Note: samples containing living tissue may only be accepted from South Dakota. Please do not send samples of dying plants or insects from other states. If you live outside of South Dakota and have a question, instead please send a digital picture of the pest or problem. **Walnut samples may not be sent from any location – please provide a picture!**

## Available on the net at:

<http://sdda.sd.gov/conservation-forestry/tree-pest-alerts/>

Any treatment recommendations, including those identifying specific pesticides, are for the convenience of the reader. Pesticides mentioned in this publication are generally those that are most commonly available to the public in South Dakota and the inclusion of a product shall not be taken as an endorsement or the exclusion a criticism regarding effectiveness. Please read and follow all label instructions and the label is the final authority for a product's use on a particular pest or plant. Products requiring a commercial pesticide license are occasionally mentioned if there are limited options available. These products will be identified as such but it is the reader's responsibility to determine if they can legally apply any product identified in this publication.

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## Timely Topics

Winter may be mostly behind us now but it is looking like we are in for a late spring. The buds are still tight on many of our early blooming shrubs, such as cornelian cherry, and unless it warms up very quickly we might see everything start just a little late this year.

## Winterburn appearing on evergreens



Winterburn is showing up on evergreens across the region. The symptoms are appearing to come on “suddenly.” The damage may have occurred earlier but the symptoms only noticed once spring arrives (a good example, the Christmas tree I set out in the yard after Christmas just started to turn brown last week). The warm, windy weather and cold or frozen soils is also causing some browning as the trees cannot replace the water lost by

the needles. There is not much that can be done for this problem as this time. If the soil is still frozen, any water you add will just puddle rather than being absorbed. If the soils are warm enough to have water infiltrate, then watering can be beneficial. Most trees will recover from this injury once the buds open and the tree puts out new needles. Tree owners concerned about their winter burned evergreens should check the buds at the tips and if these are soft, the buds are fine and will open as normal. If the buds are brittle or break off, then the buds were also killed and the tree may not recover this spring. Regardless, do not prune out winter burned branches just yet. Wait till May to see if the tree recovers.

## E-samples



**I got a picture from Minnesota of maple bark that is discolored and has some “growth” on it.** The concern was that the bark was also splitting on this tree and the tree owner was wondering if the discoloration and fuzzy material was responsible or related to the splitting.

I get questions every year about things growing on the trunks of trees. These usually are mosses, algae and lichens and none of these harm the tree. The algae are just an indication that the bark is often moist and I usually find algae on the north side of shaded trees (or trees that are being frequently hit with water from an overactive irrigation system). Moss is also common on the north side of shaded trees; the old saying that if lost in the woods without a compass you can use the moss on trunks as a north point is mostly true. Lichens are a complex of algae and a fungus and these can be found on any side of the tree and even in

open-grown trees. Lichens on a tree is good news as these are excellent indicators of air quality; they serve as the canaries in the mine shaft. Miners would carry canaries in the mine and if the bird become agitated or died, the carbon monoxide levels were too high (canaries were replaced with electronic detector in 1986). Lichens are very sensitive to air pollution and the absence of lichens, a common occurrence in large cities before pollution laws when into effect, means the air quality is poor.



**I also got a picture of a shoot from a declining spruce tree near Marion SD.** The trees are young (2-years or so) and the needles on the tips of the branches are turning red and falling off. The symptoms are consistent with what we see with winterburn. While the needle loss is a concern for young trees, the real problem will be if the buds are brittle which indicates they died as well. If the buds are soft, they will still open this year and the only

problem is the trees will probably not grow as much as normal since some of the older foliage is gone.

## Samples received

Chadron, NE FL 140001  
spruce? It looked fine a few years ago and since then has been declining and is now almost dead.

What is wrong with this 20-year old spruce? It looked fine a few years ago and since then has been declining and is now almost dead.



The sample submitted does not show any signs of a pathogen and the symptoms are consistent with stress. The internode growth is much reduced in recent years and we often see this with drought. I also suspect the branches have cytophora canker as this is a common pathogen on older (20-year old and older), and stressed, spruce. This will appear as bluish-white resin

blisters along the branches. Unfortunately the only option for this tree (the picture shows more than 80% dieback) is to remove it. I suggest watering to maintain the health of the nearby spruce.

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This publication made possible through a grant from the USDA Forest Service.