

Pest Update (April, 2015)

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John Ball, Forest Health Specialist SD Department of Agriculture,
Extension Forester SD Cooperative Extension

Email: john.ball@sdstate.edu

Phone: office 605-688-4737, cell 605-695-2503

Samples sent to: John Ball
Plant Science Department
rm 230, Agricultural Hall, Box 2207A
South Dakota State University
Brookings, SD 57007-0996

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/forest-health/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 products identified in this publication.

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Timely Topics

The warmer weather and light rains means that our trees and shrubs may soon be coming out of their long winter sleep. Pears, forsythias and cornelian-cherries were all in full bloom by this time in 2012 though the spring of 2014 really did not come until May. The slow start to spring means you still have time to prune your summer flowering shrubs...

Pruning Flowering Shrubs

Flowering shrubs require pruning to look their best. Forsythias and spireas, both noted for their bountiful sprays of blooms lining every cane, may gradually be reduced to a few sporadic flowers if these shrubs are not routinely pruned. This does not necessarily mean annual pruning but this task should be performed at least every two to three years since flowering occurs on the younger wood. Pruning not only benefits flowering but can also enhance bark color for shrubs with colorful canes. The dogwoods, prized for their vibrant red or yellow canes, can become thickets of gray stems if pruning is neglected since the younger canes have the brightest colors.



Most shrubs arise from multiple canes, which are long, relatively unbranched stems. The best means of maintaining an attractive and natural appearance to these shrubs is to prune with heading cuts. This is a type of pruning cut that stubs off the cane at about 2-inches above the ground. These heading cuts result in the formation of numerous new shoots that arise just below the cut and quickly grow as long canes. The heading cuts should be made

cleanly and straight across the cane; cutting at an angle is not necessary.

While flowering is enhanced by this pruning, the timing is critical. Spring-flowering shrubs bloom from flower buds formed the previous summer. These shrubs should be pruned immediately after they finish flowering. If instead, they are pruned during the fall or winter, the flower buds will be removed. Summer-flowering shrubs bloom from flower buds formed during the current year, meaning their flower buds are formed the same season they bloom. Summer-flowering shrubs should be pruned during the dormant season, usually just before bud-break, sometime during March or early April.



While shrub pruning is accomplished by heading cut, the number of canes removed may vary depending on the objective. If the shrub is overgrown, almost choked-out by an excessive

number of canes and flowering poorly, all the

canes can be pruned out, a technique referred to as rejuvenation pruning. Rejuvenation pruning can be done every dormant season for low-growing summer-flowering shrubs such as



bumalda spireas and potentillas. Overgrown shrubs, regardless of size or flowering time, can be pruned in this manner as well as seen in these before and after (4 weeks after) pictures of rejuvenation pruning of ninebark on the previous page. However, pruning a 15-foot common lilac to 2 inches will mean forfeiting flowers for several years while the plant recovers. Loppers are the best tools to make these cuts as the long handles provide the leverage to cut through thick canes, however, on small canes, those less than 1/2-inch in diameter, a hand-pruner may be used.

If the plant is not overgrown, then renewal pruning can be applied. Renewal pruning involves removal of about 1/5 to 1/3 of the oldest and largest canes by heading cuts. If this task is performed annually, than over a three to five-year time period, the entire shrub will be completely renewed. The season to do renewal pruning depends whether the shrub is spring or summer flowering. Spring-flowering shrubs should be renewal-pruned right after they finish flowering. Summer-flowering shrubs should be pruned during the dormant season.

The following are two lists of shrubs by blooming time.

List of common spring-flowering shrubs

Barberry (*Berberis*)
Chokeberry (*Aronia*)
Dogwood (*Cornus*)
Falsespirea (*Sorbaria*)
Forsythia (*Forsythia*)
Mockorange (*Philadelphus*)
Ninebark (*Physocarpus*)
Lilac (*Syringa*, except late lilac *Syringa villosa*)
Slender deutzia (*Deutzia*)
Spring-flowering spireas (Birchleaf spirea, *Spiraea betulifolia*, Nippon spirea, *S. nipponica*, Bridalwreath spirea, *S. prunifolia* and Vanhoutte spirea, *S. x vanhouttei*)
Viburnum (*Viburnum*)
Weigela (*Weigela*)

List of common summer-flowering shrubs

Bush-honeysuckle (*Diervilla*)
Hydrangea (*Hydrangea* except Bigleaf hydrangea, *H. macrophylla* cultivars may have spring and summer flowers)
Late lilac (*Syringa villosa*)
Potentilla (*Potentilla*)
Smokebush (*Cotinus*)

Summer-flowering spireas (Billard spirea *Spiraea billardi*, Bumalda spirea *S. bumalda* and Japanese spirea *S. japonica*)

E-samples

The most common picture and questions received last week were about this insect, the **banded ash borer** (*Neoclytus caprea*), a native borer found infesting ash and occasionally elm in our area. Landowners in south-central and southwestern South Dakota reported “swarms” of these beetles on their trees. The concern for many was that this was the infamous emerald ash borer, which it isn’t and the closest known infestations of this exotic beetle are in the Minneapolis, MN and Boulder, CO area.



The banded ash borer adults are one of the earliest beetles to emerge in the spring and take flight. The adults are about 1/2 to 3/4-inch long, dark brown with four bands of white to yellowish hairs running across the wing covers (the first two almost forming a circle). The adults are attracted to dead and dying trees and freshly cut logs. They do not typically attack healthy trees. When this insect attacks a tree, it is more an indication that the tree is in poor health, rather than

the insect being the problem. Any treatments are best focused on restoring the tree’s health rather than spraying to kill the beetles.



Browning spruce are the other common call and concern. I have received pictures such as this showing browning spruces. A common comment is that the tree is just turning brown so it must be something that just happened. This is not necessarily so. My Christmas tree was set out as a bird feeder and it’s just turning brown and it’s been dead since last fall! The browning spruce, and I expect to see more of these pictures in the next few weeks, are mostly due to desiccation injury also referred to as winter-burn. We went into winter very dry in most areas of the state and then we had a dry, windy winter, the worst combination for evergreens, particularly spruce which are prone to desiccation injury.

There is nothing that can be done at this time but wait it out. Some trees will recover and either the foliage will turn green come spring or continue to brown

and fall. If the tree maintains most of its foliage and if the buds are still plump and soft then the chances of recovery are good. Regardless hold off any pruning or removal until May to see what will recover.



I also received a picture of a bur oak with galls on its branches. There are many, many galls that form on oaks but this one appears to be the **rough bullet gall** caused by the rough bulletgall wasp (*Disholcarpis quercumanna*). This gall is usually found in clusters on the base of the new shoots and is generally round with a slight point. The galls may be slightly sticky during the summer from honeydew. The honeydew often attracts other wasps, the stinging kind, and so approach carefully in summer! The life cycle of this cynipid gall wasp is complex, as with most gall wasps, with two generations having different appearance and habit. The galls are empty now, with a single wasp developing in each gall and emerging in summer. While the galls occasionally cause some injury to the tree usually they are more a curiosity than a problem.

Samples received/site visits



Turner County **Our blue spruce is turning brown. What may be the problem?**

The discoloration is consistent with what is expected from winter-burn, a general browning of the foliage (though sometimes only the tips of the needles turn brown or only those on the new growth). I expect we will see more winter-burn as the trees come out of dormancy. The dry fall last year meant that many trees went into winter with a moisture deficiency and as the trees begin to transpire during these warm windy days, but are not able to replace this moisture loss due to the cold, dry soils, the needles begin to brown. However, the buds on the branch sent as a sample were still plump and soft so the tree may recover, just appear a little more open this year.

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