

# Pest Update (January 6-13, 2016)

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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/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

**Happy New Year everyone and welcome to another season of the *Pest Update*.**

I hope everyone had a good Holiday with family and friends – they are the true gifts.

**Celebrate the winter!** Too often we view winter as a “dull” season for landscaping, but it does not have to be this way. Evergreens, of course, can provide winter interest in the home landscape. Unfortunately, many South Dakotans (and Minnesotans) make almost their entire landscape evergreen. A good rule-of-thumb is to have no more than 1/3 of your home landscape in evergreens either trees such as ponderosa pines or shrubs such as junipers. What else to plant for winter interest? Here are some suggestions.



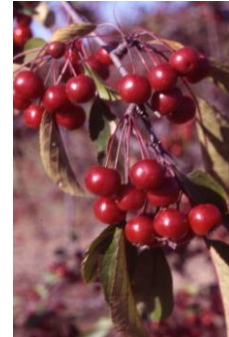
**American cranberrybush viburnum** (*Viburnum trilobum*) is a South Dakota shrub native to Roberts County (and all of northern Minnesota). It is used in the home landscape and windbreak so a very versatile shrub. The bright red fruit remains on the plant for most of the winter only to be taken by the birds in March. This is my source for robin food in late winter. It seems every year the robins return before the last

snowstorm. When the ground is covered with another 8 to 10 inches of fresh snow in April, the robins flock to this viburnum and will strip it of fruit within a few hours. Apparently it takes a lot of freezes to make the fruit palatable. The fruit is also used for preserves and jams but I suggest using someone else’s kitchen as it smells like old socks while you’re making the jam!



**Crabapples** (*Malus*) are often thought of as spring ornamentals but the fruit can actually be *the* ornamental value to these trees. There are a number of crabapples that are noted for their fruit but two of my favorites are Golden Raindrop<sup>R</sup> and Red Jewel<sup>R</sup>. These crabapples are

noted for their persistent fruit, golden yellow for Golden Raindrop and bright red for Red Jewel. The fruit on these cultivars often remains on the tree until mid or late winter. The fruit on both trees is slightly less than ½ inch in diameter.



**River birch** (*Betula nigra*) bark is not the bright white bark we often associate with birch, but a peeling, shiny cinnamon brown. The bark is most attractive on young trees and as the tree ages it becomes deeply furrowed and more of a dark brown. The tree is not adapted to alkaline soils and may experience some winter dieback north of Hwy 212. It is not susceptible to attack by the bronze birch borer, the insect that attacks the European white birch (*B. pendula*) and stressed paper birch (*B. papyrifera*).



**The first sign of spring!** Red oaks have begun to drop their leaves. Young oaks have persistent leaves and their leaves will often remain on until spring. Northern red oak (*Quercus rubra*) leaves hang on until the days begin to lengthen. Once the days start to become longer, the leaves finally begin to drop and the ground around some red oak trees was littered with leaves this past weekend. A few birds have also started their spring songs. Yes, we have a lot of winter ahead of us, but there are already a few signs that spring is on its way.

**Will the cold hurt my trees?** January has been very cold across the state with lows into the minus teens. This cold temperature is not be problem for most of our trees and shrubs as they can tolerate their coldest temperatures during January and many can handle temperatures as low as  $-35^{\circ}\text{F}$  without any injury. Eastern cottonwood and ponderosa pine can tolerate January temperatures as low as  $-50^{\circ}\text{F}$  and some other plants, such as red osier dogwood, can tolerate even lower midwinter temperatures. January temperatures are not the killers many people mistakenly believe, it is our autumns (October) and late winters (March) when most of our winter injury occurs. Some trees become dormant too slowly and some come out of it too quickly.

## E-samples



**What is this growth on my hackberry?** Hackberry witches' broom is very noticeable in the winter so I usually get a question or two about this at this time of year. These brooms are composed of thin, stubby shoots arising from a knot on the branch. They are through to be due to two agents, a powdery mildew fungi (*Sphaerotheca phytoptophila*) and an eriophyid mite (*Eriophyes celtis*). These two organisms are always found in the

brooms, but studies to prove they are the cause of the deformities are lacking. The brooms do not appear to harm their host, but they do detract from the appearance. There also seems to be a range of resistance to this problem as you can often find one hackberry covered in brooms and the adjacent hackberry completely free of them.



**Repairing a damaged tree.** I received a picture of an American linden that was damaged by the storm that passed through the Black Hills some time ago. The picture shows a trees with lots of water sprouts arising from the damaged limbs. Our thoughts on water sprouts has changed in the past decade. These rapidly growing, upright shoots were once regarded as a strain on the tree. They were considered weakly attached and “robbing” food away from the tree. Neither is true. Water sprouts are really the “reserve chute”, a means of quickly recapturing lost foliage. They do not *take* food from the tree, they

*provide* food for the tree. Sprouts can also become strongly attached and if properly pruned they will become the new branches for the damaged tree. Yes, some sprouts are weakly attached and if a cluster is left on a branch, many will break off within a few years.

The trick to making strong sprouts is to initially thin them out by pruning some of the sprouts off at their base. Do not remove more than about 1/3 of the sprouts and space out the ones that are left. A good rule-of-thumb for thinning sprouts on a limb is to cut off one sprout, leave the next two, and cut off the next one and so on. The next year you might take off another third or so of the sprouts at their base and the remainder will be pruned in subsequent years to become the new branches in the tree. I like to perform this process of thinning and pruning sprouts in early summer once the tree is in full leaf. It is easy to see the impact of your pruning. You do not want to remove more than 25% of the foliage in one year.

## Samples received/site visits

Pennington County

**Is this a dead juniper or tamarix?**



Its tamarix, also known as tamarisk or salt cedar (*Tamarix ramosissima*). This plant is invasive across much of the West, including West River South Dakota. Tamarisk was widely planted as an ornamental shrub for its tolerance to tough saline, alkaline sites and the long panicles of pink blossom in July. It was brought into the state about 1900 as an ornamental but about 20 years ago it was found crowding out the native vegetation



along rivers and streams in southwestern South Dakota. Tamarisk should be removed and most folks have pulled their plants out of the landscape. However, I do see specimens throughout Rapid City. Tamarisk can be identified by the alternate, deciduous, scale-like foliage (resembles juniper). The plant is deciduous so most of the foliage should have dropped by now (but apparently this specimen seems to be a little slow) and that is a quick way to separate it from junipers. Junipers will typically have small bluish “berries” hanging from their branches at this time of year. Not all, of course, some juniper are male so you’ll never see fruit on them. The tamarisk has a small woody capsule fruit.

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