

# Pest Update (Feb 1-8, 2017)

Vol. 15, no. 3

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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.

## 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

***Is my tree worth anything?*** This is a fairly common question from tree owners. They have a large tree in their yard that they need to remove and hoping that someone will pay them for the tree or they heard trees are worth thousands of dollars and want to cash in. First the majority of urban trees are worth far less than the removal cost so there is not a 'gold mine' standing in most lawns. But

that still means there are trees that warrant a little effort to try to find a buyer before cutting them down.

The most valuable trees in South Dakota are black walnut (*Juglans nigra*) and Russian-olive (*Elaeagnus augustifolia*). Walnut is a high value tree anywhere in the United States with individual trees sometimes selling for \$30,000 or more. We do not see these high prices in South Dakota (though they have occurred in Minnesota), but still I have seen individual trees or even logs sell for as high as \$5,000.

Russian-olive is considered a weed in much of the country, but the wood is valuable for local markets. There are a number of small mills that are always on the lookout for Russian-olive trees or logs. However, before everyone runs out to cut the Russian-olive out of their windbreaks or yards, buyers are not looking for any Russian-olive logs, but ones that are straight, no branches or old branch stubs, at least 8 feet long and 12 inches in diameter at the small end. Not common characteristics to Russian-olive logs or stems.

This is the problem with most trees that I have been asked to look at for their timber potential. The trees usually have a lot of defects along the lower 8 to 16 feet of the trunk (the largest, most valuable part of the tree); branches, old pruning cuts, cavities, cracks, crooks. All these defects can reduce a log cut from the trunk from being worth hundreds of dollars to zero.



Here is a walnut tree I looked at recently. Again, black walnut, particularly trees with a trunk diameter greater than 16 inches (at 4.5 feet above the ground) can be worth a lot, but only if they are free of defects. This tree certainly has possibilities. The trunk is straight for the first 18 feet before dividing into two codominant stems. The old branch scars along the trunk have closed over and there are no cracks. There is one small scar near the base and this may reduce its value but we will see what it brings in – stay tune.

Tree owners that are interested in seeing if there is any interest in their trees for wood can go to the South Dakota Log Finder website

and post information on their trees. The website is at <https://apps.sd.gov/AG50LogFinder/Default.aspx>

There is also more information on the various aspects of urban logging available on the South Dakota iGrow website at <http://igrow.org/gardens/trees-and-forests/urban-logging/>. The iGrow urban logging videos and factsheets were produced with a grant from the South Dakota Department of Agriculture.

### **Can we begin pruning soon?**

I have been receiving calls about when to start pruning small ornamental and fruit trees. While late winter is the traditional time to complete this task, recent studies have shown that mid-summer may be a more appropriate time for



pruning our small trees. Wounds created by pruning are walled off from infection better during the summer months than winter. But if someone wants to prune during late winter it is still an acceptable time. However, we are not yet at late winter so hold off for at least a few more weeks on your small trees. It seems we often have a severe cold snap sometime in late February or early March and this weather change from mild to cold can kill sensitive shoots and buds that are

beginning to wake up for spring. These dead shoots will need to be pruned off before spring so to avoid pruning twice I wait to see what the winter kills and then take off any additional branches needed to improve the form. I usually like to do this pruning after the risk of extreme cold weather is over – mid March – but still complete it before bud-break in April. If I miss this window, I wait till July.

### **Maples are beginning to “bleed”**



The sap flow has begun in maples during this relatively mild weather we experienced this week. Sap flow begins towards the end of winter when we have consistent day temperatures above freezing, but the nights' are below freezing. I have seen several maples bleeding this past week in response to squirrels chewing notches in the branches to lap up the sweet sap. The sugaring season is also beginning and a number of

sugar bushes in Minnesota have already started to tap their maples for syrup production and Dave Graper and the McCrory Garden crew are out as well. This

is one of the earlier starts to the season, some years it can be as late as April. We might see the sap flow stop in another week when the day temperature drops below freezing again, but at least for much of next week, expect to see flowing sap.

## E-samples



Apparently some folks are just now downloading pictures from their phones as I received a picture taken during the 2016 growing season. The question was about the discolored leaves on their pear tree last summer. The most likely agent was pear scab (*Venturia pirina*). Leaves infected with pear scab usually present with small (1/4 inch diameter), diffused, dark lesions. These lesions expand during the season until the foliage is almost entirely

discolored. The infested leaves will sometime persist but they usually begin falling from the tree by August or early September. Pear scab is closely related to apple scab but one key difference is that twig infections are common with pear scab. The lesions on the shoots appear as brown spots and become corky and canker-like by the end of the season. Pear scab can also infect the fruit, turning it to an irregular shaped pear covered with blacken spots. Treatment for the disease is the same as with apple scab, fungicide treatments beginning in the spring as the buds open and continue every 7 to 10 days beginning as the flower buds swell and continuing until three weeks after the petals fall or dry weather prevails.



I got an email asking to identify a tree. The tree is Plains cottonwood (*Populus deltoides* subsp *monilifera*), the native cottonwood for much of our state. The light winter bark sometimes has people confuse it with maples, but a quick separation clue is maples have branches form opposite to one another along a trunk while cottonwoods are alternate with branches alternating on each of the trunk.

Plains cottonwood is sometimes regarded as a 'messy' tree but it is a common sight along our streams and rivers. The burst of foliage in the spring – maybe only two months away – is the perfect welcome to spring.

## Samples received/site visits

Edmunds County

### What is causing the blackening of these needles?

When I first opened the bag and saw the blackened ponderosa pine needles inside I assumed I would find pine tortoise scales on the twigs. These scales produce a honeydew that sticks to the foliage and become infected with a sooty mold that turns the needles almost a powdery black. But no scales, nor any evidence of scales. We are investigating the possibility of a pathogen and will follow up later.

Marshall County  
leaves?

### Why did all these bumps appear on our ash tree



These fallen leaves are not from ash (*Fraxinus*) but hackberry (*Celtis occidentalis*). The bumps are the result of feeding by the nymphs of the hackberry nipplegall maker (*Pachypsylla celtidismamma*). The adults lay eggs on the underside of the expanding leaves. Once the eggs hatch the nymphs begin feeding and in response to this activity, the leaves form tissue to encapsulate the insect. This provides perfect

protection for the nymph from its natural enemies and weather extremes. However, it leaves the foliage with these ugly bumps on the bottom of the leaves. Surprisingly the bumps do not harm the leaves in the least – just their appearance.

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