

# Pest Update (Aug 20, 2014)

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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

**Lots of people are noticing 3-leaved vines and groundcovers this time of year.** What they may be looking at is poison ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*). This



plant contains an oily substance that is very poisonous and can cause a painful dermatitis. You have to touch the leaves or other plant part to produce the irritation and the symptoms may not appear until hours after contact. Gloves or boots, if not cleaned, will hold the oil and someone touching them even several days or a month or more later may develop blistering and other symptoms from the contact. Poison ivy is either a

woody groundcover or vine, though the vine form is most commonly found in the southeastern part of our state when the plant can grow up along a tree or pole to twenty feet or more. Poison ivy has three-leaflets (hence the old saying “Leaflets of three, let it be”) and white berry-like fruit. The fruit is out now so the plant can be easily recognized. Control of this plant is difficult. Herbicide treatments are best applied at about the time the plant flowers (early summer) and then reapplied a couple of weeks later. Fall applications are ineffective. Glyphosate will provide good control if several treatments are made. This herbicide will kill all vegetation so care must be used in its application. Triclopyr will also work but will kill most surrounding deciduous woody vegetation so again any adjacent desirable trees and shrubs may be injured or killed.



As if ash does not have enough real or potential problems, there are always leaf spot diseases. Rick, a forester with the South Dakota Department of Agriculture, was quick to identify a **leaf spot disease** on an ash tree in Sioux Falls. Leaf spot on ash may be due to one of two different fungi *Mycosphaerella effigurata* or *M. fraxinicola*, and the disease is often referred to as *Mycosphaerella* leaf spot or *phyllosticta* leaf spot. The leaf spot that Rick found was the

*M. effigurata*. The spots caused by this fungus appear as small yellow spots on the upper leaf surface. These spots become more numerous by late summer. Leaf spot caused by *M. fraxinicola*, are more a blotch than a spots and may gradually encompass the entire leaf. The spots are also light green.

Neither leaf spot disease is treatable by our current fungicides available to tree owners. Fortunately these diseases are not serious life-threats to the tree nor do they occur each year. We need cool, wet weather in the spring to really get the disease going.

## E-samples



Snow is the farther thing from our minds during this hot week. However I recently got a picture of **brown felt blight** which is a fungal disease that occurred on spruce branches that were buried in the snow last winter. I had a picture sent in of some lower branches of a spruce out in the Black Hills with the characteristic grayish brown mats of needles infected by this fungus. Brown felt disease is a form of snow mold, a disease that develops in the subfreezing temperatures during winter. The

dormant branches of spruce branches covered with snow, or entire seedlings covered by the snow, can become infected during this time period. Many of the snow molds disappear from the plant surface with the coming of warmer weather but the brown felt blight fungus persists and the damage is visible late into the summer. There are no chemical controls for this disease.

**Earwigs** are appearing everywhere and apparently causing some concern to folks that find them. Too many people may be recalling the *Night Gallery* episode “The Caterpillar” where an insect burrows through the brain of a person by traveling in one ear and out the other. While the patient survived the pain of the burrowing bug and felt relief upon having the insect exit, a doctor gravely told the patient that the exiting critter was a female and had laid eggs in the brain – ugh! Fortunately earwigs do not burrow through most people’s brains, I say most because earwigs do feed on dead organic matter and I am sure everyone knows of a few co-workers that might make suitable hosts.



While earwigs do feed on dead insects and plant debris, they can also be found feeding on the roots (and occasionally leaves) of many herbaceous annuals such as marigolds and zinnias as well as strawberries and lettuce. They will also feed on corn tassels. They feed mostly at night so often the damage and earwigs are not connected. The best control is prevention, keeping hiding spots and food sources to a minimum by clearing out any debris and waste from flower beds and

gardens. Earwig traps can be made by setting shallow cans – tuna cans work great – in the garden at dusk filled with about 1/2-inch of vegetable oil and empty out the dead earwigs in the morning.

## Samples received/site visits

Brookings County FL1400018

**The shoot tips are turning black on the cottonwood. Does the tree need to be removed.**



This is cottonwood and poplar shoot blight (*Venturia populina*) and the most characteristic symptom of the disease is the curved blacked shoot tip often referred to as a Shepard's crook. The disease is closely related to aspen shoot blight which causes similar symptoms on aspen trees in the state. The disease is not fatal to the tree but will result in "zigzag" grow as the shoots repeatedly dieback only to grow back. The

disease is mostly common on small trees and once they reach a height of 15 feet or more it tends to disappear. There are no effective chemical controls.

Douglas County  
**bush?**

**Could you identify this purplish**

This is common chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana*). While the species usually has green leaves, some saplings will produce purplish leaves, particularly in mid-summer.

Turner County  
**American elm leaves?**

**What is this sticky stuff on the**

This is honeydew, a substance excreted by aphids and soft scale insects. The dark powdery material on the honeydew is called sooty mold. The aphids and soft scales create honeydew as they feed on the sap of the tree through leaves and shoots. They rarely extract enough sap to cause serious harm to the tree though occasionally leaves on branches that are heavily infested will turn yellow prematurely and drop. If the sticky material is an annoyance then the tree can be treated with a soil drench of an insecticide containing imidacloprid as the active ingredient. The soil drench should be made next May (following label directions) and the pesticide will be taken up into the tree's sap to kill the insect as they feed.

Ziebach County FL1400017

**The entire tree has these small clusters of dead leaves and now the twigs are dead.**

Since only a few dead twigs were included as the sample, it is hard to make any meaningful conclusions as to the problem. The leaves dying as they emerge can occur from frost, herbicide or other abiotic agents. I will need more information to determine the problem.

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