

Pest Update (March 28, 2018)

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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.

Plant Development.....	1
Timely topic	
Snow damage and evergreens.....	2
E-samples	
Wood borer in a table.....	3
Golden buprestid.....	3
Samples received	
Grant County (winter-burn on pine).....	4

Plant Development

Will winter ever end! Much of the state enduring another snow storm this week and it looks like we are in for a cold windy Easter weekend. As mentioned last week, fortunately we have not had to many days of warm weather prior to these cold snaps. Our trees and shrubs have remained dormant rather than breaking bud prematurely and being killed back by the cold.

Timely Topics

Snow damage and evergreens

The recent wet, heavy snow left some broken evergreens in its wake. Many arborvitae (*Thuja occidentalis*) were bent under the weight of the heavy snow. This is a common problem with arborvitae, also known as northern white cedar. The columnar forms tend to have three or more slender, upright stems in their interior and these are easily bent under the weight of heavy snow or ice.



A common reaction was to go out and try to knock off the snow with brooms and shovels to reduce the weight. This is not a good practice as these additional forces can result in branch breakage. It is best to let the snow melt and allow the tree and its branches to slowly resume its natural shape. The snow will be quickly melting away since the temperatures are expected to be in the 30s and 50s for the week.

Once the snow has melted, it is time to assess the damage to your trees. Young arborvitae will slowly spring back to a upright form over the next couple of weeks so just be patient. However, if the stems are severely bent they can be *gently* pulled back to an upright position and the multiple stems bound together with a wide cloth strapping – even an old T-shirt will work – and then remove the cloth this spring after growth resumes. You do not want to use wire or nylon string which can cut into the bark and may eventually girdle the stems if forgotten and left on for the season.



The weight of the snow was enough to cause many pine trees to bend their branches almost to the ground. The extra weight of the heavy, wet snow also snapped some branches closer to the trunk resulting in a long stub. Broken branches on tree should be cleanly pruned back to the larger limb or trunk to which they are attached. This pruning can



be accomplished with a hand-pruner for small branches, less than ½ inch diameter, or a hand saw for larger branches. When using a hand-pruner, prune with the blade side closest to the larger limb or trunk. Do not leave a stub nor cut into the limb as you close the blades. Making the proper cut is the best means of protecting the tree from decay, tree paints or wound dressings do not protect against decay and can even increase the possibility of decay by keeping the interior too moist.

If the broken branches are too high to reach from the ground or if they are so large that pruning requires a chain saw, please hire a professional arborist. They have the training and proper safety gear to handle this types of tasks.

E-samples

A 'boring' week for e-samples. It's been so miserable that no one wants to be outside, including the bugs!



Imaging setting at your new walnut table and having a 'guest' come out of it! That is what happened to one person this week. This custom made walnut table had an adult insect emerge from it. The insect is a wood borer, possible the old house borer (*Hylotrupes bajalus*), but this insect is usually found in softwoods, not hardwoods. They are mailing it for positive identification and there will be a follow-up in next week's *Update*.

Another house guest was sent in as a possible emerald ash borer (from Washington state). The emerald ash borer is inside the tree at this time of year, tunneling through the inner bark as a larva. The adults do not emerge from the tree until late May so finding an adult would be a little unusual. The insect is the golden buprestid or jewel beetle (*Buprestis aurulenta*). It is one of the most commonly submitted insects as emerald ash borer due to its bright color and torpedo shape. However, the adult is much wider than the emerald ash borer, the elytra (wing covers) are grooved, and the color is not a bright coppery-green.



Samples received/Site visits

Grant County **Why are the tips of these needles browning? They are worried because a neighbor's tree looked like this before it died.**

This is winter-burn. The oldest interior foliage is completely brown, but this is normal as pines shed their third year needles during the fall and winter. The one- and two-year-old foliage is green except for the tips and this is consistent with what is expected with winter-burn. The buds are in good condition and I expect the tree will have normal shoot growth this year. Unfortunately, the brown tips will remain on these needles.

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