

PROBLEMS WITH TREES

So what are some of the tree problems? This year traveling across southeast Nebraska I have noticed oak trees and other deciduous trees that have dead branches and leaves scattered throughout the tree. There have been several trees with these symptoms over the years. There is a good chance this is the oak twig girdler that is causing the problem. We usually see a problem with this insect every other year. The good thing is it generally doesn't harm the trees. The bad thing is there is really nothing you can do about it. A small beetle emerges from May to September and lays its eggs at the junction between current and previous year's growth of red and pin oak trees and other shade trees. These eggs hatch and the larvae bore into the twigs and remain inside feeding. This causes clusters of dead leaves throughout the tree. The second year the larvae continue feeding inside the twig and complete development, pupating in the autumn. The dead twigs usually stay attached to the tree, giving it an unsightly appearance with dead branch tips scattered throughout the tree. If the twigs are blown or fall off, clean up and discard these twigs. Another insect pest, the twig pruner, may be responsible for twig drops when the broken end of the twigs has ragged edges and the inside of the twig is chewed.

There is a possibility the clusters of dead leaves could also be caused by cicadas. The female cicadas lay their eggs in slender twigs of trees, and the twig breaks and leaves die. This is called flagging. It is easy to see the brown dying leaves compared to the healthy green leaves on the other branches. So it could be twig girdlers, twig pruners or cicadas.

Bagworms have been a big problem over the years and this year I haven't had reports of them. This may be due to the extremely cold temperatures we had last winter. If you have had problems with them last year, it still is important to be diligent in scouting your cedars, junipers, firs and spruce for this pest every year. Bagworms are a pest that we will probably have to be aware of each year and treat if needed. They usually hatch in late May or June at the earliest and can also hatch later in the summer. Just keep checking out your trees for them. If you have what seems to be a late hatch and have small bags (1/2" or less) on your trees, treatment with an insecticide will provide control. It may be too late to control bagworms with insecticides if the worms are 1-1 1/2" long. You can also pull the bags off and put in water or dispose of them in a sealed garbage bag if you have them affecting small trees or shrubs.

The two-spotted spider mite has been causing problems in southeast Nebraska here on evergreens and ornamentals for several years. Symptoms of this pest usually show up in summer when it is hot. If the infestation is severe, insecticidal soap or horticultural oil maybe used for control. These are just a few of potential tree pests we need to be aware of. I know some people have been impacted by the Japanese Beetle the last couple of years and they probably will only get worse. We have a guide that provides control measures for several pests and individual guides that discuss specific control of some pests as well. If you have further questions on tree problems, feel free to contact me at University of Nebraska Extension in Nemaha County at the courthouse at 1824 'N' St. in Auburn (402) 274-4755.

Gary Lesoing
Extension Educator
Nemaha County
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