

INSPECT EVERGREENS FOR INSECTS AND DISEASES NOW

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There is not much to do in our landscapes during March, but we can inspect evergreens for pests and if found, and when justified, make plans for control later this spring.

Check spruce, Juniper and Arborvitae for bagworms. At this time of year, look for small, two inch long bags firmly attached to twigs and covered with bits of brown needles.

Each female bag can contain up to 1000 eggs. If feasible, pick the bags off and crush or immerse them in soapy water before mid-May. Do not just drop them on the ground as eggs will still hatch to infest trees.

Because bagworms can kill an evergreen, insecticide control is recommended but is not effective unless applied in June or early July after eggs hatch. For control information, go to <https://go.unl.edu/bagworms>.

Check pines for blight. Pines recently infected with *Dothistroma* will have reddish spots or bands, called lesions, encircling some needles. If a pine has been infected for more than a couple of seasons, there will be brown needles. Looking closely, these needles will have turned brown from the tip back to a lesion.

Pines infected with *Sphaeropsis* have brown stunted needles on some branch tips. The bottoms of pine cones on or near the tree will be covered with black specks. If a pine has been infected by tip blight for a number of years, many needles will have turned brown and may hang straight down as if wilted.

On spruce, *Rhizosphaera* needle blight will cause one to two year old needles to turn purplish brown near the bottom half of the tree and eventually drop off. *Sirococcus* shoot blight causes needles on the very ends of branches to turn brown and drop.

These blights usually do not kill pines or spruce quickly but affect their appearance and shortens the trees life. If you choose to control, timing of fungicide applications is critical and needs to be done in April and May. For control information, go to <https://go.unl.edu/evergreendiseases>.

When inspecting evergreens, you might notice needles that are speckled white. These are likely scale insects, but know the majority of the scales are dead and the population will appear higher than it is.

Pine needle scale is an armored scale that forms a white waxy covering over its body. The eggs overwinter beneath the dead mother's shell and hatch in May. Immatures, or crawlers, then move to new needles and insert a beak to feed on sap. Female crawlers lose their legs and develop a scale covering.

By mid to late July, eggs are laid beneath the female and she dies. A second generation is likely in late summer. The dried but empty shells remain on needles for years, so it often looks like more of a problem than it is.

Natural enemies of scale help keep the population in check, so treatment is not always needed. If used, a horticultural oil, insecticidal soap or other insecticide can be applied during the crawler stage in May and July. Oils and soaps will not harm the natural enemies of scales. Be sure to follow label directions for all.

To learn how to identify and control common evergreen and shade tree problems, attend my Major Tree Issues class on April 12 from 7:00pm to 8:30pm at the Extension office in Columbus. Call (402-563-4901) or email (kfeehan2@unl.edu) for information.