



**SOUTH DAKOTA STATE  
UNIVERSITY EXTENSION**

# Tree Pest Alert



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## Samples

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Note: samples containing living tissue may only be accepted from South Dakota. Please do not send samples of plants or insects from other states. If you live outside of South Dakota and have a question, please send a digital picture of the pest or problem.

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 listing of a product shall not be taken as an endorsement or the exclusion a criticism regarding effectiveness. Please read and follow all label instructions as the label is the final authority for a product's use on a 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.

Reviewed by Master Gardeners: Carrie Moore and Dawnee Lebeau

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## Plant development for the growing season

We are entering the deep freeze of winter. Sioux Falls experienced some highs of 24°F and lows of -5°F during the past two weeks. But South Dakota weather never stays the same for long. The forecast is for temperatures in the 40s and even 50s next week in the Black Hills.

The cold temperatures just about stopped the accumulated growing degree days (GDD base-50). We only accumulated another 4 to 18 GDD during the past two weeks. Here is the current GDD accumulation for communities across the state.

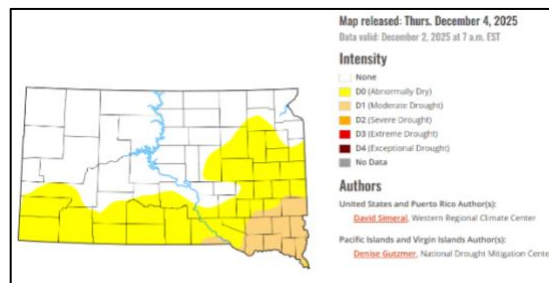
Aberdeen	3061
Beresford	3673
Chamberlain	3731
Rapid City	3065
Sioux Falls	3624

There is no plant development at this time of year. The trees and shrubs are dormant, except for the roots. Since soil temperatures at 4 inches are still between about 35°F across the state, the roots are active. They are not absorbing much water but still a little.

## Drought monitoring

We are still sliding back into drought. Only about half the state is drought free. Another 40 percent of the state is classified as "Abnormally Dry." The southeastern corner of the state, about 8 percent, is classified as "Moderate Drought."

Here is the current map from the National Drought Mitigation Center at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.



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## Treatments to Begin Now

### ***Get the bunny protection on***

Only one key one to do very soon (if you have not already done so). The rabbit population is extremely high this fall. The recent snow has left bunnies searching for food. Now many of your trees and shrubs look tasty.

The bunny favorites include apple, barberry, birchleaf spirea, burning bush, cherry, cotoneaster, crabapple, honeylocust, pear and vanhoutte spirea. The rabbits will clip the tips of canes and branches leaving a misshapen plant or girdle the base of the trunk which kills the plant.

Wire cages are the best way to protect shrubs. The cages must be flush with the ground and at least a foot higher than the anticipated winter snow depth.

Young trees – those less than 4 or 5 inches in diameter – still have thin bark that is easy to chew through to reach the sweet inner bark. These trees should have a slit drain tile place around the trunks. The base of the tile must be flush with the ground and the top higher than the anticipated winter snow depth or the first branches, whichever is lower.



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## Timely Topics

### ***Emerald ash borer update***

We continue to monitor larval development of emerald ash borer (EAB) from Dakota Dunes to Milbank. All the larvae examined are in their overwintering J-shaped form. We will not see any further changes until they start waking up next April.

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## E-samples

### ***Carpenterworm larva***

A homeowner cut down a dying ash tree in western South Dakota and found these worms inside. A picture was sent of one of them. This is the carpenterworm (*Prionoxystus robiniae*).

They are one of the most common larvae found in ash trees during the winter months (other than emerald ash borer in the eastern edge of South Dakota). This is also one of the largest larvae you can typically find in trees. This “worm” may become 2 to 3 inches long at maturity.



The adult is a large gray moth that appears in late spring to early summer. The presence of the insect is more an indication that the tree is dying or dead rather than the sole reason the tree is in condition. I would not blame this insect for the death of the tree and there is no need to spray nearby healthy ash to prevent an infestation.

### ***Can this tree be repaired?***

This was a picture sent in of a Spring Snow crabapple that split. The question was whether it could be repaired. The short answer is yes. The tree can be braced to prevent further splitting of the two leaders.





This is accomplished with screw rods threaded through the two leaders about a foot higher than the split and another one about a foot below the split. The two leaders are pulled together with a ratchet strap, the holes drilled (smaller diameter than the rod), then the rod threaded through. If it was done right, the split should remain closed once the strap is released. It may require 3/8 diameter rod to hold the split. Obviously, this repair work is best performed by an arborists.

The unasked question is why? Crabapples grow rapidly. The better, long-term solution is removing the tree, plant a better crabapple (Spring Snow is very susceptible to apple scab) and prune properly so it does not split.

### ***Cedar identification***

The question here was what kind of cedar is this tree? This is the Rocky Mountain juniper (*Juniperus scopulorum*). The other 'tree' cedar is the eastern redcedar (*Juniperus virginiana*).



The difference between the two is while both produce scale-like leaves, the Rocky Mountain juniper leaves are blunt and do not overlap. Another difference for Rocky Mountain junipers is the compressed cone (the berries) takes two seasons to mature. The cones mature in one season for eastern redcedar. This means you can always find cones (at least on a female tree) for Rocky Mountain juniper. Not so with eastern redcedar.

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### **Samples received/Site visits**

#### ***Day County, Stump coming to life***

There are always some fun stops towards the end of the season. This is the time of year when people decide to call about an unusual tree in their yard.

This certainly fits this description. A tree with flaky coppery bark was sprouting from an old elm stump. No, it was not a elm mutation. It was an Amur chokecherry (*Prunus maackia*) that was planted by a bird in the rotted stump.



#### ***Lawrence County, Trees as roadkill***

This poor tree was driven over by a car that jumped the curb. Unlike deer, trees do not run in front of cars, cars run into them. The question was the tree worth saving. Sadly, the answer is no. The break was large enough that it cannot be supported nor will it "heal" like a broken bone. The tree should be removed.

