South Dakota State University Extension

Tree Pest Alert

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In This Issue

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

March came in like a lion. Sustained wind speeds of 30 to 40 mph were accompanied by gusts of 70 mph or more. Wind gusts were recorded at 84 mph in Buffalo on March 12. High wind and red flag warnings were up throughout the state.

The Black Hills experienced several wildfires during this windy weather. The windy, dry weather drove the Qury fire near Custer to more than 7,000 acres. The intense winds caused trees and branches to come down in communities across the state.

The accumulation of GDDs is beginning to reach the point where we see some of our early flowering trees and shrubs start blooming. The bright red blooms of silver and red maples are lacing their otherwise bare branches. While these trees depend on wind to disseminate their pollen, the flowers also attract insects for the early season pollen and nectar.

Here is the accumulation of GDD for communities around the state.

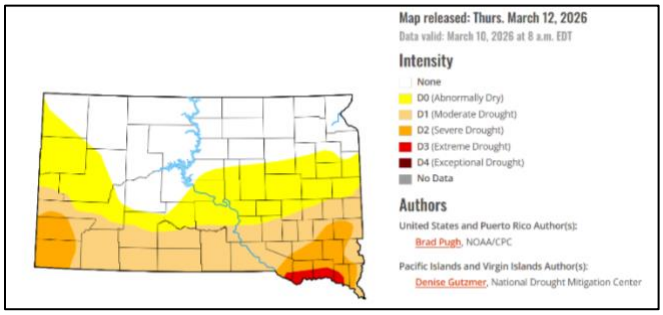
Aberdeen	20
Beresford	98
Chamberlain	122
Rapid City	120
Sioux Falls	77

We should see the bright yellow flowers of the forsythia opening within a week. It is one of our earliest spring flowering shrubs. The yellow flowers lining bare, upright shoots are a welcome sight after a gray winter.

Drought monitoring

The drought-free region of the state keeps shrinking. Less than 40% of the state, the northern one-third, is drought-free. About 28 percent of the state – the middle third - is classified as “Abnormally Dry.” The southern third of the state is classified as “Moderate Drought.” The southwestern and southeastern corners of South Dakota are now under “Severe Drought.” The southern edge of Bon Homme, Clay, and Yankton counties are now classified as “Extreme Drought.”

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



Treatments to Start Soon

It is time to start pruning summer flowering shrubs

The weather will soon turn pleasant with more warm days than cold ones. Hopefully, the mild weather will also bring spring rain. We should see shrubs beginning to leaf out over the next few weeks.

This means it is time to complete any pruning of our summer flowering shrubs. These are shrubs that bloom during the summer and fall. Common ones are bumalda spirea, panicle hydrangea, potentilla, smokebush, and smooth hydrangea.

These shrubs form their flower buds on canes that form this year. Pruning now will give plenty of time for new shoots to form and bear flowers.

All our spring flowering shrubs from forsythia to common lilacs formed their flower buds last fall. Pruning now will remove flowers. These shrubs should be pruned after they flower this year.

Timely Topics

Emerald ash borer update

We continue to monitor larval development in ash trees. While we have had a few brief cold periods, they have not been cold enough to contribute to significant EAB mortality. All the overwinter chambers we checked had sleepy, but live, larvae. Unless we see a few days of vert cold weather (-10ºF or lower) during the next week, we can expect to see a normal flight of EAB later this spring.

American bittersweet vines are loaded with fruit

South Dakota has a native bittersweet vine, the American bittersweet (*Celastrus scandens*). I can find this vine from Canton to Custer. This native vine twines around fences, tall shrubs, and trees. The bright orange-red fruit is very visible at this time of year.

There is also a round leaf bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*), previously known as Oriental bittersweet. The round leaf bittersweet is an invasive vine in North America. It can displace native vegetation. The aggressive growth quickly climbs trees, smothering out the foliage. We do not want this plant in South Dakota.

The two vines look similar. The leaves are so close in appearance that it is hard to separate them by foliage. The easiest way to tell them apart is the fruits. The fruit is clustered along the shoots near the leaf axils on the round leaf bittersweet while they are only at the tips of shoots for the American bittersweet. The seed capsule of the round leaf is yellow while the American is orange. They both have crimson aril-covered seeds.

E-samples

Giant conifer aphid

There were numerous rows of large, dark eggs lining the needles of these pines (picture on next page). The question was what are these eggs? They are conifer aphids (*Cinara*) eggs. This is a genus of aphids that feed on pines and occasionally spruce and junipers. They all look alike with large (1/4-inch) pear-shaped bodies that attach to long legs and two cornicles, tube-like structures, at the top of their abdomens.

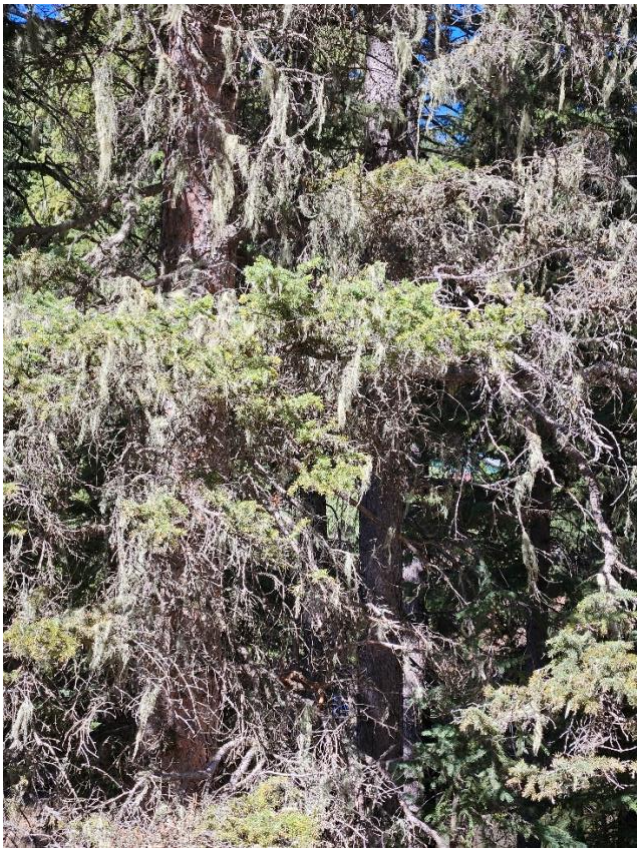
The winged females laid eggs last fall. These will hatch once the weather warms. The summer generations feed in colonies that can remove enough sap that the needles turn yellow. The infested needles and the ground

beneath them will also become sticky as the aphids excrete a waste product called honeydew.

During the summer only females are present and they can give birth to live young, so populations expand quickly. Fortunately, there are many insects that feed on aphids, so the population is usually kept in check.

Old man's beard does not kill spruce

The pale green to yellow-green tassels hanging from spruce along the streams in the Black Hills are often a curiosity to folks. This is not a disease but old man's beard (*Dolichousnea longissima* syn *Usnea longissima*), a lichen. I received a question whether these were killing trees as they were found on declining spruce trees.



Lichens form from a relation between fungi and alga or cyanobacteria (commonly referred to as blue-green alga). Cyanobacteria produce sugar through photosynthesis while the fungi provide a structure and receives sugars from the cyanobacteria.

Lichens are not parasites – obtaining substance from its host – but an epiphyte – living on the host, even a rock! They are commonly found on declining spruce but are not the cause of the decline. The lichens are just taking advantage of the anchorage that has light. Higher light intensities allow the algae to increase photosynthesis.

Samples received/Site visits

Beadle County, Zimmerman pine moth on Scotch pine

I stopped to look at some East River Scotch pine that the owner thought had mountain pine beetles. This pine-killing beetle is only found in the Black Hills forests and throughout western North America. It is not found in eastern South Dakota.

We do have a borer that disfigures and occasionally kills pine trees. This is the Zimmerman pine moth (*Dioryctria*), It is a moth with a larva that feeds in the area where the limbs are attached to the trunks. This results in breakage of infested branches.

The larvae burrow into the tree near the branch attachment. This results in the tree producing sticky, creamy white pitch masses where the insect tunnels into the wood. I was able to find a pupal skin of last year's Zimmerman pine moth in one of the pitch masses.

The larvae have not yet burrowed into the tree. They are very tiny larvae living through the winter in a silky hibernaculum beneath the bark flake. They will move out between 120 to 225 GDD and burrow into the wood.

The most common treatment is a bark application of an insecticide containing permethrin and labelled for control of this insect. The application must coat the trunk, not

just fog the needles. This will kill the overwinter larvae crawling on the bark before they burrow into the tree.

Clay County, Drought stressed spruce

This was a stop to look at some young stunted white spruce (*Picea glauca*). The trees had short needles that densely lined stunted shoots. The needles were pale yellow green, especially near the tips. These trees also had a large cone crop.

These are also common symptoms of drought stress. This area of the state was under drought for much of the past few years. The trees had not been watered during this period. The only treatment is watering once the soil warms and continue irrigation through the growing season.

Minnehaha County, Guy straps killing spruce

The deformed spruce was easy to spot in the commercial landscape. The trees were planted about five years ago and most were doing well. But this one was described as “unhappy.”

The source of the unhappiness was easy to determine once I pulled the branches away to look at the trunk. The trees had been planted as 6 to 8-foot specimens. Trees this size are often supported with guying anchors to keep them from leaning. The guy lines are attached to straps placed around the stems.

Unfortunately, someone forgot to remove the strap from this tree. The straps could not expand as the tree increases in diameter. They slowly squeezed the trunk which disturbed the movement of food and water across this injury; think of it as a tree tourniquet.

Turner County, Terminal rosette gall on willow

This strange growth on the willow tips is not due to herbicide drift (the tree owner’s suspected causal agent). These galls are due to the feeding by the tiny midge *Rabdophaga rosaria*. The name comes from the galls appearing as small rose-like clusters.

The adult midge lays an egg on the terminal bud. A single pink larva hatches and begins to feed on the expanding bud and leaves. The larva also produces a chemical which causes abnormal growth to form which encloses the insect.

The galls do not form on every shoot, so they are not a threat to the willow shrub.