Pest Update (July 17, 2013)

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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. **Walnut samples may not be sent from any location – please provide a picture!**

Available on the net at:
http://sdda.sd.gov/conservation-forestry/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 product identified in this publication.

Timely Topics
Plant development

The smoketrees are in full bloom in Brookings, almost at the normal time so it appears we have caught up in plant development for the season. The long, cold winter (which continued into spring) meant that trees and shrubs started their growth about a month later than normal.

I received samples this week from several counties asking about spider mites on dying spruce trees. The samples – provided by concerned tree owners – had fine webbing lacing though the needles and twigs. The webbing was not from spider mites, their webbing is extremely fine, but the "cotton" from the recent flowering of cottonwoods in the state. I know everyone is looking for something to spray, but the real problem with spruce this year was the drought we were in from the summer of 2011 to this spring. The only treatment for that was applications of H_2O last year.

E-samples

This is the time of year where I start getting fewer pest samples and more plant identification samples. Here are two that came in this week.

This is black chokeberry (*Aronia melanocarpa*), an ornamental shrubs that is becoming common in many parts of the state. The shrub is noted for its attractive early spring flowers and red autumn foliage color. The white 5-petal flowers are very attractive, often lacing the branches just as the leaves are unfolding but the autumn color can be a disappointing brown as our frost comes too early. The plant is also noted for its bluish-black fruit that appears in midsummer. The fruit is edible, but VERY sour (one clue is it is not quickly taken by the birds). The name chokeberry comes from the fact you will choke or pucker if you eat the fruit fresh off the plant. However, the fruit is commercially grown due to its high content of antioxidants and it can be used in jams and wine and even as a juice. The shrub can reach a height of 6 feet or more so it is not one for small places. It also is not tolerant of alkaline soils and I have seen chlorosis occur on soils with a pH of 7.4 or higher and while we are on the subject of chlorosis….

I have received a number of pictures and calls about "yellow" silver maples. The leaves on these trees are becoming chlorotic, the leaf tissue is turning yellow but the veins are remaining green). The problem is due to a microelement deficiency, most likely iron but it may also occur with the lack of manganese, due to the alkaline soils making the iron in the soil unavailable to the tree. Silver maple is one of the tree species most sensitive to this condition and can become chlorotic when planted on soils with a pH of 7.2 or higher. Once the problem occurs there is not much that can be done since lowering the soil pH is near impossible over a large area. Use of a chelated iron or manganese incorporated into the soils (in the spring) sometimes helps. Incorporating either (or both) iron sulfate or manganese sulfate into the soil can also be a corrective action, but our prairie soils often have enough free lime to reduce the value of these treatment. Other remedies such as Mir-acid and placing iron nails in the trunk or iron shaving on the ground *never* work. The best solution is to check the pH of a site before planting and then select trees that are adapted to that soil. There are also some trunk injections that are effective for several years or more but these are best applied by a commercial tree company that has experience with these products.

Samples received

Lake County **What is this powdery substance on the lilacs?**

This is powdery mildew, covered in the last issue of the Update, and it is common to see lilac leaves covered with this powdery white or gray coating at this time. It seems most of the lilacs in Brookings have this disease now. At this late in the season, no control is recommended. Unfortunately this is a very common disease of the common lilac, especially ones that are planted in shade or in areas with poor air circulation. Pruning the plant out this winter to improve airflow is probably the best course of treatment.

Mellette County **What is the knobby growth on these plants?**

This looks like goldenrod and the gall on the stem are due to feeding by the larvae of the goldenrod gall fly (*Eurostea solidaginis*). The larvae release a toxin that causes the goldenrod stem to form this gall.

Perkins County **Wilting linden tree and dying honeylocust**

The linden foliage had molded badly in the plastic bag but it appears that the leaves are infected with the fungal disease leaf blotch. This is an aesthetic problem, not a true threat to the tree's health so the wilting and dying must be related to another problem. I do see a problem with stem-girdling roots on

lindens and if the trunk appears to be going straight into the ground rather than showing a flare, this may be a possibility. I often find lindens that did not show symptoms of a stem-girdling root until 10 or 15 years after planting.

The locust is a honeylocust (and two sections of the vine, Woodbine, were also in the same bag. The reason for the death of the honeylocust cannot be determined from the sample of bark. I suggestion looking at the base of the tree's to see if you can see any conks, fruiting bodies of a fungus, as there are a number of decay fungi that attack honeylocust and one sign is a shelf-like fruiting body occurring on the trunk at the base of the tree.

Potter County **Please identify this bush and tell me if it is poisonous. The birds will not even eat the berries!**

The bush is the Tartarian honeysuckle (*Lonicera tatarica*) and birds such as robins and cardinals usually readily take the reddish-orange round fruit. The dropped seeds come up almost everywhere and now the shrub is considered an invasive plant in many areas of the country. I do not know why the birds are not eating the berries on this plant – the fruit is fairly bitter but I have never seen that stop the birds from eating them. The fruit is considered mildly poisonous to humans, particularly children, so I don't suggest trying the fruit yourself.