Pest Update (August 22, 2018)

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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.

Available on the net at:
http://sdda.sd.gov/conservation-forestry/forest-health/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 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.

Plant Development

Apple harvest is beginning in a few areas of the state so it's a good time to review how to pick apples. First, apples do not continue to ripen once picked, they are at their peak of color and flavor when you take them from the tree. Do not pick apples too early but how can you tell?

The first indication the apple is ripe is the color. The apple should be having the normal coloration for the cultivar without pale or yellowish patches. Next, if the color is right, the fruit should come easily off the branch. If you must *pull* the fruit from the tree – it's too early. If the apple is ripe, you do not need to pull it off the tree, merely place the palm of your hand beneath the fruit and roll up the apple with a slight twist. The apple should snap off with little additional pressure.

Once you picked the apple, place it in the bag, don't throw it, otherwise it may bruise. Place it in a cool spot at home – root cellars are perfect, but rare to find in modern homes so the refrigerator will do. Just don't wash the fruit until you are ready to eat it, they last longer that way.

Timely Topics

Emerald ash borer update

No adults were found last week, and I doubt if many are still flying. We are coming to the end of the ban on felling or pruning ash trees in Sioux Falls. Moving infested wood during the summer increases the possibility of adults emerging from it and into a new environment. Once we are past Labor Day all the emerald ash borers are within the tree as larvae and will remain inside the tree until next June when they emerge as adults.

This does not mean ash logs and brush within the quarantine area (all of Minnehaha County, northern Lincoln County, and northeastern Turner County) can be moved outside the quarantine area (at least not without a specific permit to do so). Just that the raw ash wood can be move around within the area. However, all ash wood cut this fall and winter should be burned or chipped before spring to avoid spreading the insect even more within the quarantine.

The attack of the monster vine!

This year trees and shrubs in shelterbelts and roadside ditches are covered with a rambling vine. This is particularly noticeable now as the vines are covered with clusters of larger white starry blooms – impossible to miss.

This is not an invasion of some alien plant, but the native wild cucumber, *Echinocystis lobata*. Why the widespread appearance this year and not last? Blame the rains. The vine performs best in moist soils near ponds and streams and with the constant rains we have had this summer, almost everywhere is a pond or stream. The vines are also much larger due to the abundant moisture.

Wild cucumber is a member of the cucurbit family and has as relatives the tastier cucumber, pumpkin, and squash. While the wild cucumber does produce a fruit in the fall, it is anything but edible. The 2-inch oval green fruit is covered with soft spines. If you cut into the fruit it is nothing more than two cavities, each containing two seeds held in place by webbing – not much to eat (and don't eat them)! They were, however, used as beads by the Dakota.

The vines do provide benefits for game and songbirds. The rambling vines provide good cover and concealment from their predators. That is about all they are good for. If they sprawl out into corn or soybean field they can interfere with the harvest.

The vines can become so massive that they shade out small trees and shrubs. While it takes a lot of vine to block enough light that it harms the small tree or shrub, this does occasionally happen. Larger trees and shrubs have enough foliage surface area that the vines rarely interfere with their development even if they appear to be completely engulfed by them.

If you do try to remove the vines from small trees or shrubs, be careful. The tendrils hold very tightly and must be cut away. Merely pulling the vine can result in broken branches and uprooted woody plants.

Since its an annual plant, if we do not receive as much rain next year, it not likely to grow to the monster it has become in 2018. No long-term control is necessary.

E-samples

Birch sawflies. I received a picture of some “worms” on a birch tree. This is not a common pest, so I rarely see samples or receive pictures of it. This is the dusky birch sawfly (*Croesus latitarsus*), an occasional pest of birch, especially river birch. Dusky birch sawfly has two generation per year and the larvae out right now are the second generation. These insects will feed for the next week or two before dropping to the soil to overwinter as pre-pupae. The adults will emerge from the soil next spring to lay eggs along the margins of the newly unfolded leaves.

The name sawfly comes from the female adults “sawing” slits in the leaves to deposit eggs. Once the eggs hatch the larvae feeds in groups chewing along the margins. There is some mutual protection in feeding as a herd. If disturbed, they will rear up in unison giving the appearance of a much larger creature.

Sawflies are not caterpillars though their appearance is similar. Sawflies have 6 or more pair of pro-legs along their abdomen while caterpillars have five or fewer. Caterpillars also have special hooks on their pro-legs that allow them a better grip the foliage. Sawflies lack these structures and more easily brushed off the foliage.

The importance of knowing the difference between these “worms”, caterpillars and sawflies, is that some pesticides are effective on one but not the other. Sawflies are very sensitive to insecticides containing carbaryl and are easily killed by an application.

Treatments are rarely needed for this insect. While these sawflies can devour a significant amount of foliage and even this late into the growing season the tree still needs its leaves, they do not appear every year so are not a long-term threat.

Dwarf Alberta spruce gone wild! I received a great picture of a dwarf Alberta spruce (*Picea glauca* 'Conica') gone wild. The dwarf Alberta spruce is just a mutated white spruce that has a very dense, conical form due to its every slow growth. The original little tree was collected by a railroad station in Alberta, Canada hence the name Alberta spruce. While these can be attractive and dense small evergreen, occasionally one or more of the branches will revert to the species, the white spruce, and begin growing as a 'normal' tree. These branches must be removed before they take over the entire dwarf tree and all you are left with is a white spruce!

Lace bugs on bur oak. I received several pictures of what appears to be lacebug (*Corythucha arcuata*) injury on bur oak. This is a common insect problem with bur oaks and I do see some injury every year. The lacebug is a sucking insect that feeds on the underside of the leaves. The feeding causes white to yellow stippling on the upper leaf surface. Severely infested leaves turn yellow, then brown, before falling prematurely. While oaks are rarely killed by the defoliation, repeated attacks can result in enough defoliation that branch dieback occurs. These stressed trees are also more vulnerable to attack by the two-lined chestnut borer which can kill the tree.

The defoliation appears to be widespread in southcentral South Dakota and this is causing some concern. I will be following up with a site visit next week to determine if this is only lacebug injury and the extent of the problem.

Stinkhorns. We are seeing a “bloom” of mushrooms currently and one of the unpleasant ones is the stinkhorn. The name is appropriate as the fungi have a very bad odor, a patch will smell like rotted flesh – yum! Well maybe not to people but flies like the odor and will land to feed on the slime on the caps which contain spores that the flies will now carry to other locations.

There is not much that can be done to prevent stinkhorns from appearing. They are feeding off dead organic matter and if sufficient organic matter remains in the soil they will continue to sprout up. Fortunately, the fruiting structures – the mushrooms – do not remain up for every long and can be easily cut and discarded.

An interesting note. Given enough organic matter and a few wet days, these can grow extremely fast. Sometimes as much as 6 inches an hour so they can literally appear overnight!

Sample received/site visits

Lawrence County **What are these seeds? They have a beautiful red color.**

These are seeds from a Tatarian maple (*Acer tataricum*). The Tatarian maple, and its close cousin, the Amur maple (*A. tataricum* spp *ginnala)*, are both noted for their attractive seed crop. This is more common on the Tatarian maple than the Amur maple and there are even a few cultivars, such as ‘Hot Wings’ (which the samples appear to be from) that are noted for this interesting late summer color display.

McCook County **What is killing this cotoneaster?**

The cotoneaster is infected with fireblight, a very common disease of cotoneaster. The easiest way to manage the disease in this shrub is to prune the infected stems (or better the entire row) back to 2-inches tall during late winter. The plants quickly grow back the following summer and usually disease free.

Sully County **What is causing all these small holes in this ash tree?**

These small, almost bb size, holes are the emergence holes to the ash bark beetle. This is a common insect that inhabits dying ash branches and trees. The beetles are rarely the reason a tree is declining but are merely attacking a tree that is already beginning to decline due to other stresses.

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