

OAK CLEARWING BORER

The Borer

Borers rarely infest healthy plants growing in their natural environments. However, when trees are transplanted into the landscape, stresses such as soil compaction, sun scald, and physical injuries from mowers or trimmers make them more susceptible to attack.

Research has shown that the adult moth of a Oak Clearwing Borer can locate a suitable egg-laying site by responding to volatile chemicals that emanate from stressed oak trees. Adults are delicate, day-flying moths that resemble small wasps or yellow jackets. The moth feeds only on nectar, so they do not cause damage. The larvae that hatch from their eggs are whitish, hairless caterpillars with a brown head.

What to look for

Early signs of clearwing borer infestation are off-color leaf foliage, wilting of terminal shoots, and crown dieback. Infestation sites are often marked by cankers, calluses, or cracked bark.



Clearwing borers expel coarse, brown frass (sawdust-like material) from cracks in the bark. Feeding holes left by woodpeckers or other birds may indicate that a tree is infested with borers. (the birds can hear them chewing, and will try to peck them out of the tree) These damaged areas can be 1/2-1" wide and 3-4" long. It is recommended that the affected area be cleaned of any loose bark or frass.

EFFECTIVE INSECTICIDES CONTAIN PERMETHRIN OR BIFENTHRIN. BEGIN SPRAYING IN LATE JUNE AND REPEAT EVERY 7-10 DAYS THROUGH LATE JULY.

Treatment solutions

Because the insecticides currently registered for borer control have limited residual toxicity, spray timing is crucial. The spray residue must be on the bark during the brief period between egg hatch and the borers' entry into the tree. This assures that the newly hatched larvae receive a lethal dose as they crawl over or tunnel into the treated bark.

Adults emerge from trees in early to mid June. The adults only live for about one week and cause no direct harm to the plants. Eggs will hatch in one to four weeks and then the young larvae will bore under the bark. Effective insecticides contain Permethrin or Bifenthrin. We carry several products that contain these insecticides. Begin spraying in late June and repeat every 7-10 days through late July. Soil drenches and systemic do NOT control clearwing borers. Non-chemical controls include utilizing a stiff wire to kill larvae and pupae in their tunnels.

