



Insect Pests and Diseases of Evergreens

Infectious conditions or insect pests cause much of the damage or stress to evergreens in Montana. Problems most affecting our Evergreens are Twig Blight, Needle Cast, Root Rot, Aphids, Borers, Spruce Budworm, Pine Needle Scale and Red Spider Mite. However, all is not lost!

Insect Pests

Red Spider Mite

Description and Damage: Mites over winter in the egg stage and appear early in the spring after plants begin to grow. Mites suck sap from the plant, causing needles to turn brown and die. Often there's a fine webbing over the needles. Mites are most severe during the hot, dry summer months.

To detect mite infestations, hold a sheet of white paper under a branch and shake the needles. The mites will fall onto the paper and be seen as tiny red moving specks.

Controls: Ortho Systemic Insect Killer (formerly known as Isotox), Malathion or other systemic sprays as indicated.

Tips: You can help keep mites under control by proper watering and fertilization of your evergreens and by hosing needles.

Pine Needle Scale

Description and Damage: Pine Needle Scale over winters in the egg stage. The eggs hatch out in late May or early June and the young feed on the sap for a short time before they begin to secrete a whitish scale over their bodies. Needles on infested trees are somewhat yellowed with the elongated, white scales up to 1/8" long attached. At first glance, the scales look like spatters of white paint.

Controls: Ortho Systemic Insect Killer (formerly known as Isotox), Malathion or other systemic sprays as indicated.

Tips: The best time to spray for scale is during the brief period after the eggs hatch. During this time the insect is mobile and has not yet produced a protective waxy coating.

Spruce Budworm

Description and Damage: Spruce Budworms are very destructive. The larva hatch out in August and crawl to hiding places in the bark. They spin a silk case around themselves and hibernate there until spring. In May, the caterpillars tunnel into the needles. As they grow, they feed on opening buds and later chew off needles and web them together. The presence of browning needles loosely webbed to the branch tips can be useful to this pest. Feeding is ended by mid-July.

Controls: Ortho Systemic Insect Killer (formerly known as Isotox), Malathion or other systemic sprays as indicated.

Tip: Apply budworm control in mid-May or as soon as buds begin to open.

Borers or Bark Beetles

Description and Damage: The most common borer in our area is the Long-horned Pine Beetle. The borers are most destructive in the larval stage and are most commonly associated with sick or stressed trees, but have been known to attack healthy trees as well. Symptoms of infestation would be small, BB sized holes in the bark and many times sawdust can be found around the holes and at the base of the tree.

Controls: Acecap systemic tree implants applied directly into the base of the tree trunk or systemic sprays as indicated.

Tip: The best method of control is the removal and destruction of infested branches and bark along with proper watering and fertilization to increase the tree's health. Rake out all debris from under the tree.

Conifer Aphids

Description and Damage: The adult aphids are long-legged, large ¼" and reddish-brown to brown. The eggs are shiny and black and are laid in rows on twigs and needles. The giant conifer aphids feed on the sap from twigs and branches often in large groups. Heavy infestations cause a yellowing of foliage, resulting in needle drop. Heavy deposits of honeydew are often associated with sooty mold growth. They appear in May and June and rapidly multiply to damaging numbers.

Controls: Ortho Systemic Insect Killer (formerly known as Isotox) or other systemic sprays as indicated.

Tips: Repeat treatment in 10-day intervals. Conifer aphids are usually attended by ants.

Diseases

Root Rot

Description and Damage: Foliage color becomes dull, may wilt, turn yellow or brown and loses its vigor. Major branches may die out and roots are often decayed. Root rot on Junipers is caused by a fungus (Phytophthora), which lives on the living roots and in the soil.

Control: Remove and discard dead and dying plants. Improve soil drainage by adding Gypsum or compost to the soil.

Tips: Avoid over-watering!

Needle Cast

Description and Damage: Infected needles begin turning yellow in July and purplish brown by late August. Needles on the bottom branches are affected first and the disease gradually works its way up the tree.

Needle Cast is caused by a fungus called Rhizosphaera, which is spread from sick trees to healthy trees by splashing rains during the rainy spring season. Symptoms will not show up until the following spring.

Control: Remove and discard infected branches. Sterilize tools in alcohol or bleach solution between each cut. Spray infected trees with Daconil.

Tips: Clean thoroughly under trees and spray ground under trees as well.

Twig Blight

Description and Damage: Branches on Junipers and Arborvitae will turn reddish-brown to gray, dying from the tips back. The disease is found on isolated branches and is most serious during the rainy season or on shrubs in shady, moist locations.

Controls: Clean debris out from under shrubs. Prune out and destroy infected branches. Spray with Daconil when symptoms first appear.

Tips: Repeat treatment 3 to 4 more times at weekly intervals.

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