

Christmas Tree Scouting

Report #4 – 4/15/09

Weekly newsletter compiled by Sarah Pickel,
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This week's report includes scouting information from: Jim Fogarty (Halabura Tree Farm), Kyle Halabura (Halabura Tree Farm), Galen May (Pine View Haven Christmas Trees), Karen Najda (PDA), Brian Schildt (PSU), Linda Signarovitz and Cathy Thomas (PDA).

In Franklin and York Counties this week, spruce spider mite nymphs are beginning to hatch on Canaan and Fraser fir.

However, in Schuylkill County, the mite nymphs have not been observed yet. The GDD range for the hatch of this pest is 7-121 GDD. In New Ringgold, Schuylkill County the GDD total is 25.5, in Elizabethtown,



Figure 1: Spruce Spider Mite damage [Eric Day, VA Polytech. Inistitute and State Univ.]

Lancaster County the total is 38 and in New Cumberland, Cumberland County the total is 55. This pest may potentially be found on nearly all Pennsylvania conifer species, but the Christmas tree hosts where this is a major concern are spruce and fir.



Figure 2: Spruce spider Mite [Sandy Gardosik]

(They can also be severe on arborvitae, hemlock and juniper.) When scouting for this

pest, find twigs with needles yellowed at the base [Fig. 1] and look at underside with a hand lens for tiny round, red eggs or red & brown mites [Fig. 2]. Some miticides may specifically target the immature life stages of the mites, so carefully read miticides labels to know when to apply a control. A list of Pennsylvania's registered miticides is available at the Penn State Christmas tree Website, <http://ctrees.cas.psu.edu>. select *2009 Insecticides and Miticides for Christmas Tree Pests*.

There continues to be white pine weevil activity in Schuylkill County traps this week [Fig. 3]. The growers were also seeing feeding damage from weevils on tree leaders. Traps being monitored in Lancaster, York and Adams County still have not yielded any white pine weevils.



Figure 3: Weevils in Teddars trap [Cathy Thomas]

The weather for the end of this week

will be warmer and drier, so I would recommend that growers, who have had weevil damage in previous seasons but have yet to see any weevils, check traps again on Thursday and Friday and monitor the tree leaders for the presence of weevils.

Balsam twig aphid eggs have begun to hatch this week in Dauphin County on Fraser fir.

Look for this pest of true firs (Balsam, Fraser, Canaan, Concolor, etc.) on twigs next to those



Figure 4: BTA stem mother [Sandy Gardosik]

showing the typical twisting damage. The

stem mother is the life stage that hatches from the egg [Fig. 4]. Growers will want to treat this life stage when most of the eggs have hatched, but before they begin to give birth to the next generation of live young. This next generation birth happens around the time of bud swell. Once the live young are present, they will find their way into the buds (or into new cones) for protection. In the new buds, the aphids will begin to suck juices from the new, tender needles, causing the needles to twist. Growers may treat with horticultural oil or a registered insecticide.

The time for Douglas Fir Needle Midge to emerge is drawing close. This orange-

bodied, white-winged fly-like insect will come out just as the very first few Douglas fir buds are breaking. It is a good idea to monitor for this pest, either by trapping as mentioned



Figure 5: Douglas Fir Needle Midge Adult
[Sandy Gardosik]

in last week's report or by just looking for twigs with dropped or broken needles and watching the buds on that tree [Fig. 5]. With some chemicals insecticides, application may be made before bud break. Growers may want to make a second application 5-7 days after emergence. For pesticide options, check the Insecticide and Miticide list mentioned above.

In Cumberland and Schuylkill Counties, nymphs of Cooley spruce gall adelgids on Douglas fir were found to be waxing over, signaling the end of the time for chemical treatment. Growers may not notice this problem until the summer when the white

cottony wax covering is completely formed and the needles begin to kink, but chemical treatments applied at that time will not be effective. Next fall, growers can apply a dormant oil or appropriate insecticide treatment.

The next scouting report will be available on April 22, 2009.