

Christmas Tree Scouting

Report #5 – 4/22/09

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

Happy Earth Day! This week, scouts are seeing buds swelling on Douglas fir and Fraser fir in Cumberland, Schuylkill and York Counties. Also, buds of Colorado blue spruce and Concolor fir have started to swell in York County. For many pest and diseases, bud break signals the appropriate time to apply controls.

In Schuylkill County, the eggs of Balsam twig aphid have begun to hatch. Last week, they were hatching in Dauphin County. This gray-green aphid [Figure 3] can be found on the undersides of true fir needles, feeding close to the stems. To easily see this insect, look for the clear bubble of honey dew they will excrete as they feed. Now is the time to chemically treat for this pest.



Figure 1: Balsam Twig Aphid [Sandy Gardosik, PDA]

As the buds are swollen and just begin to break, these aphids will lay their young down in the buds where they'll be protected as they do their damaging feeding. For a list of registered insecticides, refer to the 2009 *Insecticides and Miticides for Pennsylvania Christmas Trees* list found at <http://ctrees.cas.psu.edu>.

Adults of Douglas Fir Needle Midge will be emerging soon. As the buds begin to swell and break on trees with previous infestations, growers will notice swarms of very tiny orange flies



Figure 2: Douglas Fir Needle Midge [Sandy Gardosik, PDA]

[Figure 2] hovering around the buds. Registered chemicals may be applied before bud break. A second application may be made 5-7 days following emergence. For a reference, view the sheet mentioned previously.

Growers can be monitoring Colorado blue spruce now to look for Spruce needle rust [Figure 3], a disease that causes yellow to rusty colored bands on the most recent season's needles. The treatment program for this is similar



Figure 3: Spruce Needle Rust, *Cryomyxa weirii* H.S. Jacks [Tracey Olson, PDA]

to that of Rhabdocline needle cast on Douglas fir. Growers can begin their fungicide treatment at the first sign of budbreak.

Rhabdocline and Swiss Needle casts [Figure 4] will begin sporulating on Douglas fir very soon, so growers should be ready to make their fungicide applications as the buds are swelling and the very first buds are showing signs of breaking. Protection from infection will require 3-4 sprays throughout the season. For a recommended spray schedule, refer to

the first report of the 2009 season and read the supplemental article by PDA Pathologist Tracey Olson.



Figure 4: Rhabdocline and Swiss Needle casts [Tracey Olson, PDA]

Lastly, White pine weevils were finally found in several traps in York County. Usually by this time, the weevils have begun to lay eggs in the leaders, so sprays made beyond this point may still allow for some damage.

The next scouting report will be available on April 29, 2009.