

Prescription Program

Pine Bark Beetles

The tree care innovator and leader

Since 1981, **Arboguard** has been the consistent innovator in natural tree care, preservation, and beautification. We understand the role trees play in the quality of life where we live, where we work, and where we play.



*Southern pine beetle pitch tubes
(Photo by University of Georgia)*



*Trees damaged by southern pine beetles
(Photo by U.S. Forest Service)*

Bark beetles kill thousands of pine trees in urban and residential areas each year resulting in millions of dollars in damage. Understanding the attack process and life cycle of these pests is crucial to their control and prevention.

Warning Signs

- The first sign of a pine beetle attack is often a yellowing or browning of the needles.
- By this time the tree may have been under attack for several weeks or months.
- The beetles travel along corridors such as rivers, streams or fields, and lay eggs under the bark of a weakened tree.
- As the adult beetle bores into the bark, the dust mixes with resin and hardens to form tubes on the outside of the bark.
- Underneath, the larvae bore through the bark and tunnel between the inner bark and outer wood, girdling the tree's vital life source.

Identification

There are six species of pine beetles. All six attack and kill living trees. The southern pine beetle (SPB) is the most common in the southeast.

- The beetles range in size from 2.5 mm to 12 mm long.
- Different species may strike simultaneously on different areas of the same tree.
- Generally, the SPB can be found on the middle two-thirds of the trunk, but all areas of the trunk are vulnerable to any one of the species. The pitch color can be yellow, white or reddish. The insects are active from March to October. The SPB is usually found on loblolly pine. Other host pines include longleaf, slash, sand, pond, shortleaf, Virginia, Table Mountain and pitch. Some beetles attack spruce, fir and larch.

Prevention

- Pine beetles often attack damaged or stressed trees first and then move to neighboring healthy trees. Trees that have been injured by lightning or storms, or stressed by overpruning can attract beetles.
- Delay any pruning until winter when beetles are less active.
- Be alert to the warning signs of beetles and/or dying trees.
- Some trees can be saved if the larval feeding has not completely girdled the tree.

Treatment

- Infested trees should be cut and removed from the site.
- An insecticide should be applied to healthy trees remaining in an area of infestation.
- Chemical applications to the entire trunk can protect a tree from beetle attacks.
- A soil therapy program will help improve or maintain tree health.
- Valuable trees benefit from preventive treatment.

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