



Pest Corner

February, 2005

Here are three common pests that you should expect to see at this time of the year. The following brief problem descriptions are taken from the many great articles Don Tapio has written for local newspapers. For more information, pictures and IPM solutions, consult the Hortsense CD or the Landscape Plant Problems manual.

Corticium Red Thread (Turf)

The fungus disease, Corticium Red Thread, is fairly common in our cool, moist, coastal climate. It is noticeable during the spring and fall, but especially during the winter. The pink coloration is the result of light pink to red fungus strands which grow from the tips and leaf sheaths of the grass blades. The disease is primarily cosmetic, it rarely kills any grass and it is more severe on lawns low in vigor. Although there are turf fungicides registered for the control of this fungus, the disease can be effectively controlled simply by maintaining a balanced nutritional program. WSU turfgrass specialists recommend applying 5 pounds of ammonium sulfate (21-0-0) per 1000 square feet of turfgrass area four times a year.

Silver Spotted Tiger Moth (Conifers)

Silver Spotted Tiger Moth's (*Halisodonta argentata*) main host is Douglas fir, but they will sometimes feed on spruce, pine, or other conifers. Because they make tents, these small furry, light rusty-brown or blackish caterpillars are often confused with tent caterpillars; but Silver Spotted Tiger Moths feed only on conifer needles. They hatch in the fall, feed until cold weather begins, and hibernate in the dense webs they spin during the winter. They resume their feeding in the early spring or on warm days as early as January. After they are about two-thirds grown, they begin to disperse and feed throughout the tree singly or in small groups. There are currently no chemicals registered for control of this insect. Simple removal of the infested limb, tent, and caterpillars is frequently all that is necessary. If removal of the limbs threatens the tree's symmetry, then removal of the caterpillars alone is an option.

Spruce aphid (Conifers)

Spruce aphids begin feeding as early as January with trees being fully infested by mid-February. Shiny, sticky "honeydew" is the result of their feeding. What spruce aphids lack in size, they make up for in large numbers. They are very small and very green

which means you will probably need a magnifying glass to see them. Another and perhaps easier way to validate their presence is to hold a piece of white cardboard under a couple of branches and vigorously shake them. If a lot of the debris that falls on the cardboard begins moving about, you probably have an aphid infestation. Infested trees will look sick and spindly with yellow needles until new growth camouflages the damage. Current chemical recommendations from WSU for the control of spruce aphid include insecticidal soap and orthene, used according to labeled directions.

Pest Corner is the title of a series of gardening articles which appears in the Grays Harbor and Pacific Counties Master Gardener Newsletter.