



Pest Corner

September, 2005

Banded Alder Borer

This is the time of year when relatively harmless, but exotic-looking, insects begin to appear. One of these insects is the Banded Alder Borer. Because of its exotic appearance, many people associate it with the highly destructive Citrus Longhorned Beetle and Asian Longhorned Beetle reported in the media. Neither of these destructive beetles has been found in Grays Harbor or Pacific Counties, but they have received wide media attention and publicity because they were found in Kent and Bellingham on wood and plant material shipped in from other areas of the country.

The harmless Banded Alder Borer, also called California Laurel Borer, is frequently found this time of the year around piles of firewood and dead alder trees. It feeds on a variety of downed hardwood logs, especially alder, willow and cottonwood, and is not a threat to live trees.

Citrus Longhorned Beetles are serious orchard pests in Asia and represent an even larger threat to trees in the U.S. where they have no natural enemies. Despite its name, the Citrus Longhorned Beetle attacks a wide range of living hardwood trees and a few conifers. It is also fond of maple, alder and poplar trees. Its larvae kill trees gradually by boring large holes throughout the heartwood of the tree. The Citrus Longhorned Beetle is closely related to the Asian Longhorned Beetle, which is just as destructive.

You can tell the beetles apart by their marking and size. The Banded Alder Borer has three solid white bands across its back, while the Citrus Longhorned Beetle has irregular white patches on its back. The Banded Alder Borer is about two inches long vs. the Citrus Longhorned Beetle that is 1 to 1 ½ long. Both have black and white banded antennae. If after thorough examination, you feel you may have captured a Citrus Longhorned Beetle, put it in a jar and call the Washington State Department of Agriculture at (800) 443-6684.

Yellow Jackets

Yellow jackets become more aggressive and dangerous in late summer.

They are heavy bodied wasps, black with yellow or white markings. They live in gray, papery nests located either below ground or suspended above it. Worker yellow jackets

search for any meat-based item, such as insects, or sugary item, such as rotting fruit. They vigorously defend their nest and queen against intruders.

The yellow jacket nest is run by a queen whose sole responsibility is to lay eggs. She begins a nest in the spring by laying a few worker eggs and raising them to adults, after which she may no longer leave the nest to hunt. Workers provision, expand and defend the nest all season long. By the end of summer, the nest may contain hundred or even thousands of workers. It also contains a crop of new queens and male yellow jackets (drones).

By the first frost, most workers and drones have died and only new, fertilized queens remain. New queens leave the nest to find a protected spot to over-winter and begin the cycle all over again in the spring.

If a yellow jacket nest is too near human activity, it may be necessary to destroy it. Spray it at night when the workers are inside and relatively calm with an aerosol insecticide specifically made for yellow jacket control. These aerosols propel a stream of insecticide up to 20 feet so that you can stand off at a safe distance while spraying directly into the nest opening. Do not pour gasoline or paint thinner into nests. It is dangerous, environmentally harmful, and illegal.

Fall Webworms

The large tents you see in trees at this time of the year are made by the fall webworm. Fall webworms are never as prolific as tent caterpillars and although their tents may be unsightly, they usually cause minimal damage. Fall webworms feed on the foliage of a variety of trees and shrubs. They are particularly fond of alder, cottonwood, walnut, and apple - occasionally feeding on apple fruit as well as foliage.

Fall webworms are conspicuously hairy. They appear rusty tan with a dark, almost black, body color. Some populations have a lighter tan color phase. Pruning out infested branches is probably the best control option.