



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Bugs on my Tree. Should I let Them Be?

OFFICERS

Tyler Stevenson – President
ODNR Division of Forestry
Columbus, OH

David Bienemann – Vice
President
City of Hamilton
Hamilton, OH

Eric Davis – Acting Treasurer
Tree Care, Inc.
Dayton, OH

DIRECTORS

Virginia Bowman
FirstEnergy/The Illuminating Co.
Brecksville, OH

Scott Conover
City of Upper Arlington
Upper Arlington, OH

Dale Hopkins
AEP Ohio
Steubenville, OH

Kevin Jones
ACRT, Inc.
Akron, OH

Sue Mottl
City of Stow
Stow, OH

Steve Schneider
The Ohio State University
Columbus, OH

Eric Davis – Past President
Tree Care, Inc.
Dayton, OH

**Ohio Chapter International
Society of Arboriculture**
Dixie Russell, CAE, CMP,
Executive Director & Secretary
PO Box 267
Columbus, OH 43105-9998
Phone/Fax (614) 771-7494
Email: dixie@OhioChapterISA.org

Author John Palmer, ISA Certified Arborist
June 27, 2019

“Mom, there’s a BUG in my room!!”

Most of us have heard – or given – that panicked pronouncement. Many have never gotten past the visceral heebie jeebies of those moments. My theory? People love Nature... until Nature starts behaving like Nature.

As an arborist, those “heebie jeebies” make my phone ring all the time. “Ahhhhh! There’s a bug eating my tree!” “Ants are crawling up and down my tree. That means it’s dying, right?” “My sister’s cousin’s chiropractor says that when moths fly from trees, they’ve got a disease.” The theories are almost endless. And often amusing.

First, let’s make sure when we say “bug” we mean bug. An insect. 6 legs, and sometimes 1 or 2 pairs of wings. There are more than a million species, and more than half the known living organisms are insects. So, does your tree have a “bug”? You betcha. A bunch of them, actually. The \$64,000 question is: Is that a problem?

Many insects, like certain midges and small stingless wasps, lay their eggs on tree stems and leaves causing a reaction that creates those weird, fuzzy or odd shaped “bumps” on leaves. Inside are the next generation of larvae. They’re called galls, and they’re harmless to trees, but they’re weird looking and that freaks out people who power napped through high school science. Don’t call me about them. The Zombie apocalypse doesn’t start that way...

It’s hard not to be aware of the devastation of Emerald Ash Borer whose larvae destroy Ash trees by their feeding. That’s an insect, and a devastating one at that. Other serious insects to threaten trees include the Asian Longhorned Beetle, Hemlock Woolly Adelgid, and more recently, the Spotted Lanternfly. These are direct threats to trees. Out west, millions of trees have been killed by Ips beetles, Spruce beetles, Fir beetles, and the major pest — the Mountain Pine beetle. So, it’s understandable people would be concerned about what insects can do to trees.

But, not all “bugs” are bad bugs. Many bugs – along with bees – are pollinators. With bugs (insects) everywhere, what’s a tree owner to do? Well, a good place to start is not confusing your hairdresser or your brother-in-law with an Entomologist (bug nerd). Let those who study insects and trees provide you with both identification and evaluation.



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

With the hundreds of millions (billions? trillions?) of insects around, the likelihood you'll see one on your tree is even greater than the likelihood you'll get spammed on social media today. What's also likely is the insect you see is not a problem for your tree. Japanese beetles feed on many trees and can make them unsightly, but they rarely cause the death of a tree. Bronze Birch Borer on the other hand, is often fatal to Paper (white) Birch trees. Interestingly, River (reddish brown) Birch are generally resistant to it.

So, when should you treat for insects? Or should you? The one issue with treating for insects, is that many treatments are "broad spectrum" insecticides, meaning not only will they kill your "bad bug" but also any beneficial insects that feed on your tree, that may actually be predators of "bad bugs". Care must be taken when considering treatment options. Also, is there an acceptable level of an insect population? The answer is yes. Moderate or low level infestations are usually not a problem. Predators and weather conditions often keep insect populations under control. In many cases, a threshold needs to be determined and reached before treatments should be considered. Let Nature be Nature, I say. Remember, nearly 600 native, beneficial moths and caterpillars call Oak trees their home.

So, yes, the Honeylocust Plant bug can be annoying if it drops onto your porch furniture while you're enjoying your morning coffee. The Elm Flea Weevil can make your Siberian Elm look like it was attacked with miniature shotguns. The Sassafras Weevil can chew kidney shaped holes in your Magnolia. Aphids create sticky honeydew that drops on your deck or driveway and makes walking barefoot an adventure, but all of them are what Nature does, and in almost all cases, the result is not fatal to the tree.

Over 1,000 Ohio Professionals Ready to Help!

There are over 1,000 qualified tree experts in the state of Ohio that have been designated by the International Society of Arboriculture as Certified Arborists. These tree care professionals have experienced rapid growth over the past decade and there is a significant amount of knowledge required to perform at the highest level. To find one in your area, visit www.Trees4Ohio.org.

– END –

ABOUT US: The mission of the Ohio Chapter International Society of Arboriculture is to advance responsible tree care practices through research, technology, and education while promoting the benefits of trees. Visit us at: www.ohiochapterisa.org.

INTERVIEW AN ISA CERTIFIED ARBORIST: Please contact the Ohio Chapter ISA if you are interested in interviewing a local certified arborist.