



Oak Twig Pruner Mayhem

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Farmers often have problems in their fields that need attention. However, an often forgotten portion of their property is the trees that surround their homes and re-

side in the non-cropping portions of their fields. Tree farming is a viable method of deriving income from those portions of your property that are not suitable for traditional farming. Others simply keep trees for their beauty and utility for shade. This time of year, many smaller branch tips may suddenly turn brown and even fall out of the tree. Whether your trees are for profit or utility, this browning can cause a lot of concern for the health of the trees.

There are many possible causes for the dieback of branch tips. Often the diebacks are the work of the twig pruner, *Elaphidionoides villosus* (F.) and oak twig pruner, *E. parallelus* Newman.

Adult oak twig pruner beetles appear from early spring to early summer. Females deposit eggs in slits near the tip of very small green branches. After hatching, each larva hollows out the center of the twig to its base. This tunneling causes the leaves on the branch to die and turn brown. In late summer or fall, the larva severs the branch by chewing from the center outward to the bark.

Severed branches later break and fall to the

ground with the larvae inside the severed branch. The end is plugged with frass (a mixture of excrement and sawdust). Protected inside the branch, the larva overwinters and then pupates into the adult form the following spring. Usually there is only one generation per year; however, some individuals will wait two years before pupating.

Adults are about 3/4 inch long and slender with very long antennae. The antennae are longer than the length of their body. Coloration ranges from light to dark brown with irregular patches of gray hairs, giving them a mottled appearance.

These beetles will attack pecan and hickory as well as other forest, shade and fruit trees, but prefer to attack oaks. Pruned twigs drop to the ground or hang loosely from partially severed branches. The ground under heavily infested trees may be littered with fallen twigs and branches. While these attacks to the trees are seldom serious, heavy twig losses reduce the nut and/or fruit crop.

Control of twig pruners rarely requires insecticides. Collect all of the severed twigs on the ground in the fall or winter and burn them. The most effective control requires collecting the twigs wherever possible in the immediate neighborhood and destroying them as well. Δ

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