
Twig Girdler

By Jane Morse, Manatee County Extension Agent

Have you noticed an unusually large number of small branches and twigs lying on the ground beneath a tree, or branches dying and twigs hanging on the tree? When you look closely at the fallen twigs do they look as though they were cut with a knife with slightly rounded edges and a little rough to the touch? The twig girdler beetle was probably the cause.

The main season for adult twig girdlers is September through November. These are long-horned, wood-boring beetles that live in many hardwoods. They prefer twigs about the diameter of a pencil. The female beetle chews around the entire outside of the twig until the twig is almost separated from the tree. She then lays her eggs under the bark of the dying tip.

The twig girdler needs a full year to complete its life cycle. Most of its life cycle is spent as a larva tunneling and feeding in the dead girdled twigs on the ground. The adult beetles are about 2 inch long and grayish-brown in color. They are very difficult to see because they blend in with the tree bark. They have long antennae that are as long or longer than the beetle itself.

To observe their life-cycle, collect the fallen branches and place them in a shaded area. Then, at about monthly intervals, cut open a few branches to see the number and size of the developing insects.

Hosts:

They are especially fond of hickories, oaks, pecan, elm, persimmon and hackberry.

OVER 

Control:

The best way to control twig girdlers is to collect and destroy all of the fallen branches on the ground. Burning, burying in a moist location, exposing the twigs in a hot, dry area, or putting out in the trash are some of the options for destroying the larvae. By getting rid of these branches, you are also getting rid of the immature twig girdlers.

Among large established trees, loss of a few twigs in the canopy results in little or no real damage. However, among seedlings, sprouts, and small, young trees damage can be severe. An approved insecticide (such as Sevin) may be used for highly valued trees experiencing severe damage.

For more information see these websites:

<http://extlab7.entnem.ufl.edu/PestAlert/jlf-0329.htm>

http://www.fl-dof.com/Pubs/Insects and Diseases/insects_hbs_twig-girdler.htm

<http://www.ag.auburn.edu/dept/ent/bulletins/twiggirdler/twiggirdler.htm>

<http://www.sfrc.ufl.edu/4h/twiggird/htm>

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