

From The Treetops ...



Cankerworms

In past years cankerworms have caused some extensive damage to trees in Swift Current. They feed on most broad-leaf trees and shrubs, but prefer American and Siberian Elm, Manitoba Maple and various fruit trees.

The first signs of infestation are the appearance of small “shot holes” in new leaves; larvae can be found under the leaves. During severe outbreaks, trees and shrubs may be completely defoliated. Healthy trees will usually produce a new crop of leaves by mid-July. After three or more consecutive years of severe attack, tree growth is slowed and branches in the crown may die back.

Cankerworm larvae are light green to brownish-green, often with a darker stripe down the back. They are sometimes called inch worms or ‘loopers’. Cankerworms spin “silken threads” that allow them to drop from foliage to escape predators and to lower themselves to the ground when full-grown. These “silken-threads” also allows cankerworms to transfer with the wind to other trees.

Cankerworms drop to the ground and burrow into the soil when full grown. Moths of the fall cankerworm emerge from their cocoons in mid-September and October. Spring cankerworms remain burrowed throughout the summer, fall and winter and emerge as moths from the end of March to mid-May. After the moths emerge, they crawl up the trees to lay their egg masses in the crown of the tree. The eggs of both the fall and the spring cankerworm hatch in spring. Methods for control of cankerworms include:

Banding

Female cankerworm moths are wingless and must crawl up the tree to lay their eggs. By applying a sticky barrier which the moths must cross, homeowners can help prevent eggs from being laid in trees. Trees should be banded from late March to mid-November to catch the cankerworm moths as they are emerging from the soil. It is important to band all trees in an area as cankerworm larvae could spread to-and-from unbanded trees. In the event of an infestation, the City will concentrate their efforts on control of cankerworms by spraying. Homeowners can assist this effort by banding their trees, as well as City boulevard trees, if they so wish, using the following method:

How to band ...

- Wrap a 6 -8” strip of fiberglass insulation around the trunk about 4 -6’ above the ground.
- Cover the insulation with plastic – black looks better – and secure with duct tape.
- Cover the plastic with a sticking agent. Tanglefoot or axle grease are recommended.
- Reapply the sticking agent regularly and keep band free of debris such as leaves and insects to ensure effectiveness.

Remember to remove the band between banding times to keep your tree bark in good shape. Banding supplies are available at local garden centers and hardware stores.

Pesticide Control

You can also spray your tree with products containing the bacteria *Bacillus thuringiensis kurstaki* (Bt.k.).

- Homeowners can use products containing Bt.k., sold under various trade names, on their own trees and on City-owned trees.
- Use pesticides that are specific to the problem, sold in small amounts, ready to use and apply the product only to the location where there is an infestation (spot treat)...**always follow label directions for proper application.**
- Homeowners can also hire commercial tree sprayers to spray privately-owned trees in their yard. The commercial sprayers must possess a Pesticide Applicators License. If spraying a City-owned tree, commercial tree sprayers must be approved by the City to spray and must only use a product containing *Bacillus thuringiensis kurstaki* (Bt.k.).

It is illegal for homeowners and private contractors to spray any other products on City-owned trees.

The City of Swift Current will not be banding boulevard trees, but rather will concentrate on control of cankerworms and tent caterpillars by spraying City-owned boulevard and park trees. If the conditions are favorable City crews are typically spraying from mid-May to mid-June when the worms are hatching and feeding on trees. A commercial product called Dipel containing the bacteria *Bacillus thuringiensis kurstaki* (Bt.k.) is used. This product affects only worms and is non-toxic to other insects, birds, animals and humans. The worms eat the product, stop feeding within 2-3 hours and die in a few days.

The City does not spray private trees.

Community Services would like to remind the public of the following items with regards to trees in Swift Current:

Annual Elm Tree Ban from April 1 – August 31

Provincial legislation states that Elm trees **must not be pruned** between April 1 and August 31 each year. It is during this time that the Elm Bark Beetle is most active and is highly attracted to fresh pruning cuts. All citizens should also remember that it is illegal to store or transport elm firewood at any time. Elm wood should be disposed of at the City's landfill site, where it will be buried or undergo a controlled burn. Please follow this process in order to keep all elm trees in the City of Swift Current healthy and disease free.

Tree Pruning and Removal

Community Services would like to remind property owners that any tree on the frontage of properties could be a City boulevard tree. If homeowners are unsure about trees situated near City sidewalks, we encourage you to call Community Services for verification. City boulevard trees can range from 3 to 15 feet in distance from the sidewalk in, towards your property. **Please note that it is illegal to damage or remove city trees; anyone caught doing so can be subjected to a fine of up to \$2,000 plus any assessment/replacement costs.**

**For more information,
please call Community Services @ (306) 778-2787.**