

Drastically Increasing Numbers Of Southern Pine Beetle Destroying North Carolina Trees

The southern pine beetle, one of the most destructive forest insects in the South, is rampant in the Mountain and Piedmont sections of North Carolina and present in large numbers in a few eastern locations.

Beetle numbers have increased drastically in the last three months,

salvage operations in areas of infestation. "Harvesting forest trees when they reach maturity and following a good sanitation program are the best and quickest means of beetle control," Whitfield said.

The beetle is more likely to be found in stagnated stands of over-mature trees, smaller

according to North Carolina State University forester Fred Whitfield. "It is present in vigorous broods and has spread rapidly," Whitfield said. "It is present in some eastern areas where it has not been reported before."

The N. C. Forest Service and NCSU foresters are suggesting

trees in dense stands, trees on poor growing sites or in trees that are under any other form of stress.

"The best protection against the beetle is a good, healthy stand," Whitfield believes.

Symptoms of southern pine beetle infestation don't show immediately. Its presence may be

indicated by patches of dead and dying pines. Infested trees may have small reddish-brown globs of resin with a hole in the center of each. The attack starts in the bark in the middle and upper sections of the trunk.

Ten days to two weeks after the tree has been attacked, the needles turn yellowish-green. As the

infestation progresses, the needles turn a deep yellow. This is when the beetles leave to infest other trees.

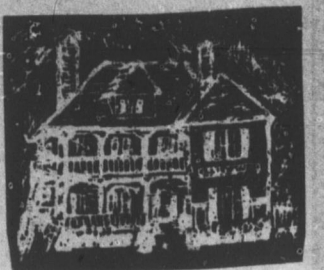
If the bark appears to have been riddled with a charge of bird shot from a shotgun, the beetles have left the tree.

If beetles attack in late fall or winter, the foliage may remain green until spring.

To confirm that a tree has been attacked by the southern pine beetle, peel off a section of bark from

the infested area. If there are winding, S-shaped tunnels on the inner side, beetles are present.

Natural factors are important in the control of this pest. Temperatures of zero or below kill large numbers in the winter. In some cases, woodpeckers are of considerable help. Diseases, insect predators and insect parasites are important factors in natural control.



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