

1995 Honeylocust Pest Complex

one- or two-year-old twigs, usually around the nodes. During a typical year, the eggs hatch about one or two weeks following bud break. During 1995, however, egg hatch coincided with the flush of new growth. Large numbers of nymphs were present, and their feeding activities resulted in quick and severe curling of the new shoots. Often, the damage was so severe that homeowners were convinced their honeylocusts had died over the winter because they were not leafing out.

Rex Bastion, PhD

During the spring of 1995, many honeylocust trees across the Midwest were severely injured by a complex of sap sucking insects. The term "complex" is used when several different insects are present at the same time on a host and cause similar injury. In this case, both the

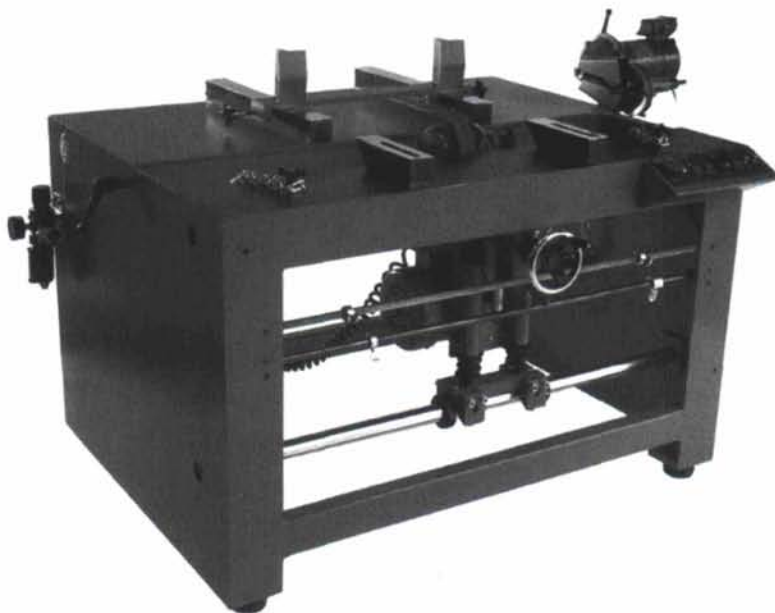
honeylocust plant bug and honeylocust leaf hopper were involved.

On many trees, both insect species were involved. On others, only one of the two. The biology of both insects is similar. Each overwinters in the egg stage. The eggs are typically inserted into

Nymphs of both species continue to feed as they mature, favoring developing foliage. Development is completed by late June, when clouds of flying adults can be dislodged by a simple tap on a branch. Mating occurs and the females insert their eggs into young twigs. These eggs will hatch the following spring. By the end of June, the vast majority of the plant bugs and leafhoppers

(continued on page 34)

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(continued from page 14)

have disappeared. There is only one generation each year. Honeylocust will continue to put on new foliage throughout the season as long as conditions are favorable for growth. By the middle or end of July, most trees have recovered and look fairly normal.

Management of this insect complex is straight forward. Both insects have been around for a long time. Damage has been of little concern except in localized situations. Why the population exploded last year is unclear but probably relates back to ideal weather conditions during mating, egg laying, overwintering, and developmental periods.

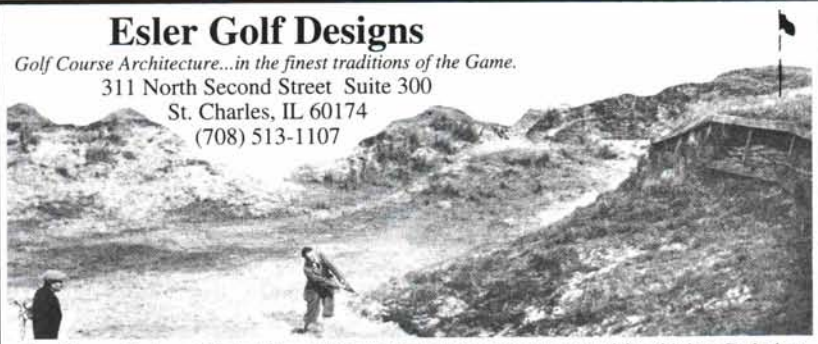
The best strategy is to monitor honeylocust trees during and following bud break. Pay special attention to trees that were heavily infested last spring. Look for

the rapidly moving nymphs of both insects. Leafhopper nymphs will have a triangular, hump-backed shape, whereas the plant bugs will be flat and oval. Nymphs of both species are light green and very small.

If nymphs are abundant, the trees can be treated with any labeled insecticide. Soaps and oils would work against the youngest nymphs but would likely need to be repeated.

If there are only a few nymphs present, consider not treating or delaying treatment applications for a few days. Honeylocusts are tough plants and can recover rather easily from this type of injury. Trees that look like they will surely die in the spring usually releaf and look little worse for the wear after a few weeks. Consider mulching, light fertilization and good water management as an alternative to spraying. ■

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