

Controlling Borers on White Birch Trees

Borers have destroyed many beautiful white birch trees. The bronze birch borer is a common insect pest across the mid-west. Early symptoms of borer activity include yellowing of leaves at the top of the tree, then die back at the top and eventually the entire tree may die. Eggs are laid in bark crevices by a slender, 3/8" long, bronze beetle in May of each year. Eggs hatch and the legless, white, flattened grub tunnels beneath the thin bark. The tunnelling about under the bark loosens it and also girdles the limb or trunk being fed upon.

Control alternatives include planting birch species not commonly attacked by the bronze birch borer. These include river birch, a bronze bark birch, or a white bark species called Whitespire, which appears to be resistant to borers. Fertilizing and watering to prevent drought stress appear to reduce borer activity, but birches grown in the open are under stress in mid summer.

Insecticide application is another alternative. Since 1970, entomologists at the University of Illinois have suggested the use of Cygon 2E as a spray applied in late May or early June and repeated three weeks later. This year we also suggest Dursban as an alternative insecticide spray.

Another technique which has been tried and evaluated since 1977 is the use of Cygon 2E applied as a band or collar on the trunks of white birch in late May or early June. The results for the past seven years have been favorable. The method is to simply apply Cygon 2E as a concentrate out of the original container in a 5- or 6-inch band around the trunk below the lower limbs. Apply it with a paint brush or, if there are many trees to treat, with a small, low pressure sprayer. As with spraying a dilute spray, apply on a dry day when the concentrate will dry rapidly. It will be translocated into the tree and will kill hatching borers.

Cygon will leave a slight yellow stain on the trunk but will disappear before fall. Do not come in contact with the Cygon concentrate while applying it. Do not apply a band wider than six inches. Banding is not an improved method over spraying the birch tree but is easier and can be used where spraying would be difficult. Neither spraying nor banding will save a severely borer-damaged birch tree. Also, do not band non-birch trees suspected of being infested with borers as Cygon may injure or kill other trees.

—Roscoe Randall, Extension Entomologist, University of Illinois



Imagination, Experimentation Are Keys To Creative Thinking, Problem Solving

When you have a problem to solve, you can easily attack it in the same old ways and come up with the same old solutions that sort of work or that once worked, but are you missing some new and unique solutions because you aren't thinking creatively?

The next time you're faced with a problem of any sort, serious or minor, routine or unusual, try one or more of these mental exercises in creativity:

1. Reverse the way you look at the problem. Turn it upside down, take a completely different approach to it. Don't be afraid to be absurd in your thoughts once in a while—the fanciful can lead to some very practical solutions. How would Moon Maid solve it?

2. Tear it apart. Then analyze the relationships among the pieces. How are they the same? How do they differ? What if you could change one link in the chain—what effect would it have on the whole? Try altering the color, shape, timing or size of one or more parts.

3. Change the order of the parts. Short things, massage them, jiggle them, line them up in different ways. New ways of seeing the problem will begin to emerge.

4. Find an analogy. What is this problem like? Is it like a little kid pushing an apple up a hill and every time he gets halfway up someone rolls an orange down on him? Find an analogy and you'll see the problems more clearly.

5. Challenge your assumptions. This isn't easy, but ask yourself absurd questions like, Who says it has to be like this? Why should I believe that organizational structures need a boss? Challenge every assumption you can identify; it will strengthen your understanding of the problem itself.

6. Let your thoughts run wild. Fantasize. Play a crazy game of ". . .What if?" What would I do if there were no more water available for a year? What would I do about this if I were three years old? Where would I start to build this system if I were the only survivor after a nuclear holocaust?

7. Cash in on the bonus of your own odd thoughts. Carry a notebook, and keep one by the bed at night. When an idea strikes you - silly or not - write it down. When you have a brilliant idea as you are falling asleep or waking up - write it down. Then periodically go through your book of thoughts and toss out the trash. There will be more wisdom there than you might have thought, and it will all be information and ideas you might otherwise have forgotten or not noticed.

These seven steps are parts of a process called creative thinking. People who come up with good ideas use creative thinking. They aren't afraid of some silly ideas, because they know that even in the silliest, there might be a grain of wisdom to use to their advantage. Try it, you'll like it.

—Forefront