

ask the expert

BY BALAKRISHNA RAO

Chestnut borer

Some of the oaks on our clients' properties have two-lined chestnut borer problems. How well will Merit insecticide manage the problem? Will Astro do a good job?

— IL

The two-lined chestnut borer is a flat-headed borer similar to bronze birch borer. In theory, Merit should help manage the problem if it's used according to label guidelines. Reports indicate that Merit provided variable results when used for bronze birch borer management.

Your other choice is to use insecticides such as Dursban or Astro. As you may know, Dursban will be discontinued for industry use in the near future. Therefore, become familiar with alternative products for dealing with these destructive pests.

Borers establish on stressed and weakened plants. Stress may be caused by defoliating insects and/or early foliage diseases like anthracnose. Improve plant health through proper watering, mulching and fertilization. Read and follow label specifications for best results.

Barking up the wrong tree?

I have two large post oak trees that stand side by side and are losing bark from the base of the trunk upward, and outer branches as well. Also, they have a dark brown powder on the trunks. What can I do to stop this?

—TX

The dark brown powder you have described is most likely related to borer insect activity. Re-examine the bark and trunks for the presence of borer insect larvae and/or larval feeding galleries. In general, borers establish on weakened trees. Study the plant on-site to determine why the tree is declining.

The primary problem could be related to abiotic stress such as drought or biotic problems like wilt or canker disease. The bark loosening or peeling all over the plant indicates that the tree is dead or dying. Consider the possibility of oak wilt and/or shoestring root rot caused by *Armillaria* sp.

If there are any other valuable trees in the area, examine them for possible borer, insect, canker, wilt or root rot problems. Tap the bark on the trunks to determine if it's loose. If so, bark trace and remove. If there is evidence of borer activity, treat with insecticides such as Dursban or Astro.

If there is evidence of oak wilt or other canker diseases, provide proper treatment. In general, there is no fungicide treatment for cankers. For treatment of oak wilt disease, Alamo fungicide trunk injection treatments work well.

Read and follow label specifications for best results.



Manager of Research and Technical Development for the Davey Tree Expert Co., Kent, Ohio

SEND YOUR QUESTIONS TO: "Ask the Expert" Landscape Management; 7500 Old Oak Blvd.; Cleveland, OH 44130, or email: sgibson@advanstar.com. Please allow two to three months for an answer to appear.