

NEWS RELEASE
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FRUIT TREE BORERS

BACKYARD HORTICULTURE

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Several types of boring insects can affect fruit trees. The most damaging is the Pacific flatheaded borer, *Chrysobothris malis*. It can attack most deciduous fruit trees. Pacific flatheaded borers attack aboveground portions of the tree that have been previously injured by sunburn or other causes; this differentiates them from peach tree borers, which bore into undamaged trunks, according to the U.C. publication #3332 Pests of the Garden and Small Farm (288 pgs. \$35.00).

Tunnels excavated beneath the bark by the borer larvae cause sap to seep through the bark, creating spots that appear wet; there are no frass piles on the exterior as with the peach tree borer. Later, these areas may crack and expose the mines. Feeding by the Pacific flatheaded borer may cause a portion of the bark to die, or girdle and kill young trees.

The adult Pacific flatheaded borer – a hard, dark, mottled beetle with a bronzy cast – blends in well with the bark and is not commonly seen. The females lay their eggs on injured areas on the trunks of young trees or limbs of older trees. Young larvae feed under the bark in the rapidly growing outer wood and bore deeper into the trunk to pupate. Excavations are usually filled with finely powdered sawdust. The light-colored larvae have a distinctive shape with a flattened enlargement just behind the head.

Management: Flatheaded borers often invade sunburned areas on the trunk of newly planted first year trees. Painting the tree trunk from 24 inches above to 1 inch below the soil line

with white, indoor latex paint or whitewash will protect the trunk from sunburn and flatheaded borer invasion. Train your trees to avoid flat areas that will sunburn; when you prune, leave a few extra twigs to shade limbs below that may be prone to sunburn.

In older trees the best way to avoid infestations is to keep your trees sound and vigorous. Avoiding water stress is particularly important. Infrequent, but thorough irrigation during the summer is the best prevention. Prune out all badly infested wood, and burn or remove it from the orchard before the growing season starts. Spraying for this insect is not recommended.

Weather Data:

U. C. Weather Station – Mariposa County Fairgrounds, 1,976' elevation, February 6 – 12, high temperature 68 degrees, low temperature 34 degrees, rainfall 0.63 inches.

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