

Mountain pine beetle arrives on the plains

Written by Holyoke Enterprise

By Linda Langelo, Horticulture Program Associate

The Colorado State Forester for the northeastern region of Colorado, Norland Hall, announced the mountain pine beetle was found in Willard, Sterling and Fort Morgan.

Yes, the mountain pine beetle has been concentrated in the Rocky Mountains and Black Hills areas. For the past few years, those residing on the plains have watched the devastation from a front row seat. However, this bark beetle which is only about ¼ inch long with black or brown coloring. The larvae are yellowish-white with no legs and dark heads.

These beetles attack ponderosa, lodge pole, limber and occasionally scotch pines. If you have any of these trees in your landscape keep the trees healthy. The best natural defense is a healthy tree. Healthy pines are less attractive to the beetle. Other natural defenses are woodpeckers and clerid beetles. Mother Nature can help control outbreaks by providing extremely cold temperatures. However, when planting your landscape use a diversity of trees in your plan and properly space the tree to match its mature height and width. Overcrowding adds stress to the trees. To create an analogy for you, picture the idea of having a family of ten live in a two bedroom home with no basement and two bathrooms.

In our current economic state, everyone is looking for a bargain. Firewood for some people is the primary way they keep their homes heated in the winter. These beetles have devastated acres of trees and are providing a cheap source of firewood. Firewood is being sold from acres of those ponderosa trees from Colorado and Wyoming. If you purchase firewood from such a source, remember if the bark is still intact, there may be mountain pine beetle larvae still alive and active in the firewood.

The signs to watch for are a popcorn-shaped masses of resin on the trunk where the beetles initially attack and have started tunneling. Notice any sawdust in the bark crevices or on the ground. Woodpecker feeding is another piece of evidence with pieces of bark on the ground. Woodpeckers also feed on other larvae as well. In May or June the crown of the pine would turn reddish-brown and would be a late symptom of attacks the previous season.

Mountain pine beetle arrives on the plains

Written by Holyoke Enterprise

If you have any questions or see the popcorn-shaped masses of resin on the bark or fresh sawdust, please feel free to contact your local Extension office.