

Protecting Evergreens from Insect Attacks

Every spring the Highlands Ranch Metro District forestry crew heads out to the parks and parkways in the community to spray all pine and spruce trees – roughly 15,000 trees. They are protecting trees from infestation by the Ips Bark Beetle and Zimmerman Pine Moth. What's different this year is the forestry crew is also protecting pine and spruce trees from the Mountain Pine Beetle.

The Mountain Pine Beetle has attacked tens of thousands of trees in Colorado's high country. In 2008, many northern Colorado communities reported their first cases of Mountain Pine Beetle attacks on local trees. Experts believe the move of the Mountain Pine Beetle into the Front Range is due to a strong wind event that carried the beetles east into local communities.

No trees in Highlands Ranch have been attacked by the Mountain Pine Beetle. But, there's no reason to assume another strong wind event couldn't blow beetles into our neighborhoods.

Proper watering, injury prevention and proper planting techniques all increase a tree's chances of survival. If trees have not been infested, preventative chemical applications in late spring to early summer can be effective against the beetles. The Metro District uses one application for control in spring, however two applications may be used as Ips Bark Beetles may have up to four generations per year. These types of insects cannot be controlled once they have infected a tree.

Characteristics

Mountain Pine Beetle – typically infests mature stands of lodgepole, ponderosa, Scotch and limber pine and kills the tree within one growing season. Attacks are evident on the entire crown of the tree characterized by popcorn-shaped masses on the trunk where tunneling begins. Eight to 10 months after an attack, foliage will begin to turn yellowish to reddish throughout the entire tree crown.

Ips Bark Beetle – can infest trees of any age and at any location. All spruce and pine trees are at risk if they are in a stressed condition. Ips may take several years to kill a mature tree. An Ips Beetle generally starts its attack at the top of a tree and progresses downward over a period of years.

What should you do?

If your yard contains any pine or spruce trees, the Metro District suggests you think about making an investment by spraying your trees. The Mountain Pine Beetle could potentially come to Highlands Ranch, so now is the time to consider the health of your trees.

As a homeowner, you can call a tree company and have a certified tree care specialist evaluate the health of your trees. If you choose to have your trees sprayed, the Metro District recommends you look for a company with licensed pesticide applicators.

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