

Preventing borer problems

Flat-headed borer, *Chrysobothris sp.* is a serious pest in the SW desert. This genus of beetles contains a number of insect pests known to cause damage to trees and shrubs by boring into the wood. While protected from the elements, eggs are laid by female beetles and the developing larvae feed on the inner tissues. It is not uncommon for them to spend the entire winter inside the bark causing damage as they feed.

Damage from boring insects is common in the desert. We have identified borers in willows, locusts, ash, plum, apple, peach, and pear trees. A single borer may kill a young tree. Older trees are also susceptible, but since they have more vascular tissue it usually takes more than one borer to be fatal.

Control

Preventing stress is the key management tactic. Ensure that plants are getting adequate irrigation (but not too much). The soil should be able to support the plants you are growing, and proper fertilization and general cultural practices should be used. Prune out infested limbs as soon as possible to reduce the population and spread to other trees. Chemicals can be applied as trunk and limb sprays at the time that adults are flying and laying new eggs.

Timing is important for control, but often difficult to determine. The Flat-headed apple borer for example, becomes active in June in the northern regions of the state. This would translate to late April and early May for those of us in the southwest. Populations can sometimes be determined by the trapping of adult beetles. Trapping the insects has proven an effective monitoring tool, but does not give control by itself.

Chemical sprays are not always effective as they do not control the insect once it has gained entry inside the tree. Carbaryl, "Sevin" applied to the trunk just before the adults become active, will give fairly good control. Another approach is to use the systemic chemical Imidachloprid, "Merit". Although, effective for some pests, we have not been able to document how effective this product is on flat-headed borer.

Be sure to read the label before buying and applying any chemicals. Not all trees appear on every chemical label. Take special care when treating fruit trees that you know which chemicals can be used and how closely they may be applied to harvest.