

Tree Pest Alert: Cottony Ash Psyllid

Parks has identified the Cottony Ash Psyllid in Red Deer. This invasive pest feeds on Black and Manchurian Ash trees, consuming the sap, causing curling of the leaves, and ultimately killing them. Please read on for information on how to deal with this pest.

Cottony Ash Psyllid

Hosts and damage

Attacks Black and Manchurian Ash trees. Larvae pierce leaf tissue and consume the sap, injecting a toxin into the leaves. Symptoms include wilting or curling leaves and sometimes premature leaf drop in the summer. Attacks may eventually kill the tree.

Physical characteristics

Psyllids are tiny insects; the larvae are difficult to see with the naked eye. An adult is about 1/10 inch long and yellowish with black markings on its body. It has four clear wings and resembles a cicada or an aphid.

Biology

They overwinter as eggs attached to the buds and the outer branches. They hatch in spring and begin to consume sap from the new leaves. Damage becomes obvious as new leaflets curl under from the sides to enclose the psyllids, which reside within a white, cottony material they produce. The psyllid has two generations per year. The first generation of larvae hatch in mid-May at bud break, and the second hatch in mid-July.

Why should you manage this pest?

A healthy, mature ash can tolerate some damage from the feeding of this insect. Well-watered trees tolerate psyllid damage more easily than drought-stressed trees. However, if a tree is attacked repeatedly over several years, it can be weakened and even killed. Management of the psyllid will help to control its spread to other properties.



Ash leaf damage from the psyllid



Ash leaf damage from the psyllid



Larvae (left)

Adult (right)

Control procedures

Spraying the tree with insecticidal soap may kill the pest. Timing is critical; it is best to spray as soon as leaves begin to emerge from the bud on your trees. As soon as the leaves begin to curl, it becomes extremely difficult to treat the pests. For more chemical controls, contact your local garden centre or a pest management company.