

European Elm Scale

Hort Hotline: 403-938-8031

European elm scale is an introduced soft scale insect that attacks American elm as well as hackberry. This insect is usually noticed when the honeydew produced by female scales begins to grow black sooty mold on tree trunks, branches and outdoor amenities.

European elm scale produces one generation per year. In late May to early June, mature scale can be identified on branches and tree forks. They are up to 10mm long, oval and gray-brown in color with a white waxy fringe. Crawlers, which are yellow in color emerge in late June to early July and are found on the underside of leaves. The feeding of European elm scale can cause stunted chlorotic foliage, premature leaf drop and branch dieback.

Elm scale control can include dormant oil application, pressure washing and tree injection of a botanical injectable insecticide formulated with azadirachtin, an extract of neem tree seeds (not neem oil). Dormant oil should be applied before the buds swell and before new growth starts in the spring or in the fall after leaf drop. If applied after growth starts, the new tissue can be damaged. Be sure to read and follow all label instructions. It is important to make thorough coverage when you spray, taking care to spray bark crevices and cracks where insects may be overwintering. Pressure washing of affected trees will wash the sooty mold off and can reduce scale populations by knocking the insects off the tree. This can be done before bud break in the spring or in the fall after leaf drop in order not to damage foliage. Care should be taken not to damage tree bark and foliage. Tree injections must be done by a certified pesticide applicator as the insecticide is a registered pesticide with Health Canada's Pest Management Regulatory Agency.

Note that elms can only be pruned between October 1 and March 31 by provincial law to prevent the spread of Dutch elm disease. www.stopded.org

Contact the Town's Urban Forest Specialist if you have questions.