

WHITE PINE WEEVIL

Be on the lookout for white pine weevil in the Okotoks area. This damaging insect emerges from the duff at the base of spruce and pine trees in the spring. The adults move to the top of the tree to the highest leader where they lay eggs. The hatching larvae then feed under the bark of the leader which cuts off the water supply. This causes the leader to wilt and droop forming a 'shepherd's crook' appearance. Continual damage rarely kills a tree but it can result in a misshapen tree with multiple leaders.



Chemical control is difficult and has limited effectiveness. Therefore, the best method is to recognize the damage, remove the infected parts and destroy them. This will disrupt the life cycle and potentially reduce the population in the area. In late spring and early summer, look for the drooping leader while it is still green and prune below where the damage occurs to capture the larvae while feeding. If the crook has turned brown, then the larvae have emerged as adults and vacated. Afterwards, it may be necessary to retrain a new leader by taking the strongest looking lateral at the top and bend it upwards to establish a new leader. You can secure the leader in place to the main trunk below the damage with a small stick tied with ribbon. Leave the stick in place for one to two seasons before removing.

In our region spruce trees are most susceptible especially Colorado spruce because it prefers leaders with a larger diameter (12mm or greater). Spruce trees tend to have smaller diameter leaders particularly if grown in the shade. It also tends to attack smaller trees (under 10m) in open grown conditions. With this in mind keep a close eye on your spruce and pine to help control this insect.

Any questions or concerns, please call the Urban Forester at 403-938-8958.