

New Threat To Douglas Fir

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nia, Lehman said, "How did it get here? We have no idea."

This midge was previously detected in Juniata County in 1995 on Douglas fir trees from Oregon. After the first detection, follow up investigations showed no new infections.

Lehman stressed that the Douglas fir needle midge "is restricted to the Douglas fir. It is not going to affect any of the other fir trees. It is not going to affect any of the pine. It is not going to affect any of the spruces."

This midge is a small fly whose larvae live in the Douglas fir tree needle and feed on the plant material. When there is an infestation in a tree, needles will have a gall (bulge), needles will have discoloration, or, if in the fall, small

holes will be left from where the larvae have emerged from the needle.

So far this year, Lehman noted that the infestation has been light to moderate and that PDA is "not seeing entire trees that are defoliated" and that it is "not going to lead to the decline of Douglas fir production in the state."

She also said, the midge is "not going to kill the tree or cause a problem in a home. It is going to make the tree unsellable," in regards to Christmas tree sales.

Noting that the midge is an "aesthetic problem," Lehman said that needle loss and needle breakage "make a ratty looking tree."

The cycle of this midge begins with its larvae wintering in the soil under infested trees. In the spring, it will emerge and the

adults will deposit eggs on the emerging buds and elongating needles. The larvae hatch and chew into the needle; needles will form a gall around the larvae. In the late summer, larvae will emerge from the underside of the needle and drop back into the soil.

A challenge with this pest is misdiagnosis by growers. Two diseases that Douglas fir needle midge can be mistaken for is Rhabdocline needle cast in the late winter and early spring, and needle bends might be misdiagnosed as damage from Cooley adelgid.

To complicate diagnosis, this needle midge and either Rhabdocline or adelgid can occur at the same time.

In addition to misdiagnosis, the other challenge is a tree producer could have an infestation



Rayanne Lehman shows an easy, inexpensive way to trap midges to monitor when they emerge from the soil in the spring. Photo by Charlene Shupp Espenshade

and not realize that it is needle midge because of its newness to Pennsylvania.

Lehman stresses this is a good time for growers to be evaluating their trees for signs of infestation. "The gall is most noticeable" and if found, growers should begin to make plans for spring trapping before bud break.

Right now the only controls available to tree producers are through spraying and chemical

controls.

"When you get a new pest into an area," said Lehman, "for some reason the pest moves, but its bio-control agents don't move as easily. It will be awhile before the bio-control agents catch up."

If producers think they have needle midge or need assistance in diagnosis, Lehman encouraged producers to contact their local PDA plant inspector or Penn State extension office.

Taking Off The Top Bad For Trees

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — Getting a bad haircut is just a temporary condition in which the hair grows back none the worse for wear. But removing the entire canopy of a tree — a practice called "topping" — has much more lasting and sometimes fatal consequences, warns an arborist in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences.

"Topping trees is not pruning," explained Bill Elmendorf, assistant professor of urban and community forestry in the School of Forest Resources. "It is indiscriminate, drastic cutting and a reduction in the tree's energy-

producing factory — the canopy."

Elmendorf said cutting the central trunk and tops of main branches severely weakens a tree by removing both leaves and stored carbohydrates. Topping reduces a tree's ability to generate food and energy by photosynthesis.

"Topping is really the ultimate in tree abuse," Elmendorf said. "It's usually done by unqualified and unknowledgeable tree cutters. In some cases, qualified arborists top trees at the insistence of homeowners who don't understand the damage they are paying to have done to their tree."



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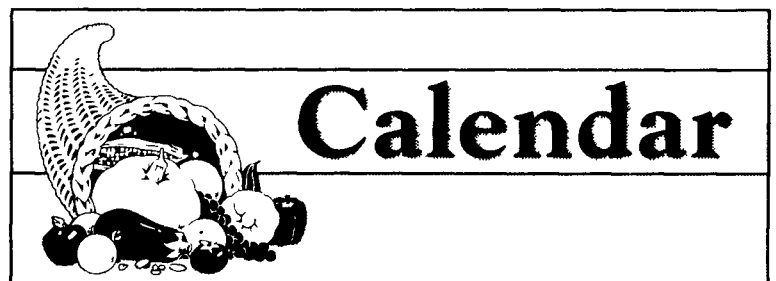
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WHAT TO DEPEND ON. MASSEY FERGUSON



Calendar

Saturday, December 6
Managing Woodlands For Recreational Purposes, Lake Morey Resort, Fairlee, Vt., 9 a.m.-5 p.m., (802) 656-0037.

Thursday, December 11
Montgomery County Farm Market Seminar, Session 1, Cochranville Community Center, 7:30 p.m.-9:30 p.m., (610) 696-3500.

Organic Produce Growers' Meeting, Iron Skillet Restaurant, Petro Shopping Center, Avoca, 7 p.m.-9:30 p.m., (570) 963-6842.

Friday, December 12
Grounds Managers' Winter Seminar, Warrington Motor Lodge, Warrington, PA, (215) 345-3283.

Tuesday, December 16
Montgomery County Farm Market Seminar, Session 2, Honey Brook Twp. Building, Honey Brook, 1 p.m.-3 p.m.
New England Vegetable and Berry Conference, Center of New Hampshire Holiday Inn, Manchester, N.H., thru Dec. 18, (413) 545-3696.

2004
Thursday, January 8
N.Y. AGR-Lite meetings on greenhouse fruit and vegetables, Riverhead Suffolk Co-operative Extension, (607) 255-3688.

Saturday, January 10
Pennsylvania Farm Show, Farm Show Complex, Harrisburg, thru Jan. 17.

Tuesday, January 13
New Jersey Vegetable Growers Annual Convention, Borgata Hotel Casino, Atlantic City, thru Jan. 15, (856) 797-1686.

Wednesday, January 14
New York AGR-Lite meeting on greenhouse fruit and vegetables, State Experiment Station, Highland, N.Y., (607) 255-3688.

Thursday, January 15
New York AGR-Lite meeting on greenhouse fruit and vegetables, Iroquois Banquet Hall, Canajoharie, (607) 255-3688.

Saturday, January 17
New York Low-Input Sustainable Farming Conference, New York State Experimental Station, Geneva.

Tuesday, January 27
Mid-Atlantic Fruit and Vegetable Convention, Hershey Lodge and Convention Center, thru Jan. 29.

Wine Grape and Small Fruit Program at the Mid-Atlantic Fruit and Vegetable Hershey Lodge and Convention Center, Hershey.