Cankerworms

FACT SHEET

GREEN DROP Tree Care





What they are:

Cankerworms are caterpillars that feed primarily on the leaves of American elms, Manitoba maple and Green ash in May and June. We often call cankerworms Loopers, inchworms or measuring worms. Cankerworms spin down from trees on silken webs.

Winnipeg has two types of cankerworms, the fall cankerworm and the spring cankerworm Both look similar and cause damage in the spring when the leaves come out.

Both the spring and fall cankerworm are about 2.5 cm long when fully grown. They range in color from light green to brownish green with a dark stripe down the back.

What is the life cycle of a cankerworm? The fall cankerworm adult, which is a moth, lays its eggs on trees before winter.

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Symptoms:

Small holes in the new leaves are often the first sign of damage. As the cankerworm larvae eats, the holes become larger until only the leaf veins remain. During high populations, cankerworms can completely strip trees. Leaving them vulnerable to insect and disease.

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Prevention:

A tree is normally very tolerant of some defoliation and control efforts are unnecessary when only a few larval cankerworms are present. However, at times when the cankerworm populations are high, it may be necessary to control them with the use of biological products or chemical pesticides.

Biological products like DIPEL contain the active ingredient Bacillus thuringiensis var. kurstaki (Btk) to control cankerworm larva. The product is applied to the leaves of the tree, once feeding begins the caterpillar dies with 2-3 days. The product is rainfast (resistant to water wash off) within 2 hours.

Once the cankerworms are hanging on their silken threads, contact chemical control is the only possible alternative.

Contact:

GREEN DROP Tree Care

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