

VIBURNUM BORERS

Phil Pellitteri –U.W. Insect Diagnostic Lab

Major branch dieback, plant decline, or even plant death on Viburnum species in Wisconsin is commonly associated with the caterpillars of clearwing borer moths. Heavily infested plants appear unhealthy, and often show swellings cracks and emergence holes at the base of the plant.

Two species of clearwing borer moths, the viburnum clearwing borer, *Synanthedon viburni* and lesser viburnum borer, *Synanthedon fatifera* attack from ground level to about 18 inches above the base of American highbush cranberry and other Viburnum species. Gnarled and scared stems with sawdust or are sure signs of attack. Swellings and calluses growth indicate the healing of old injury sites or long standing problems.

Life cycle: Adults of both species are day flying moths that mimic the flight and appearance of wasps. They are bluish black with yellow markings, clear wings and a wingspan of 3/4 inch. Larvae are pinkish white caterpillars with reddish brown heads. During late and June and July, adults emerge from infested plants and deposit eggs on bark near wound sites. Larvae tunnel in the bark and cambium but do not enter the wood. Over time this will cause distortions and swellings on the main stems and branches.



Dieback on shrub



Close up of lower stem



Control: Strong vigorous plants are less attractive to borers and more likely to survive attack. Good plant maintenance includes prevention of bark injuries and wounds will reduce problems. In nurseries pay close attention to differences in cultivar susceptibility. Plants that require high maintenance and yearly pesticide treatments should be dropped.

Chemical control is targeted during the adult moth egg laying period. Larvae under the bark are protected from treatments. Pheromone traps can be used to monitor the first adult activity in spring. Without these traps to aid in the decision making, sprays containing the insecticide permethrin should be applied to the basal portions of the plant during mid June and in heavy infestations reapplied in Mid July. Treat from ground level to about 18 inches up the stem.

For more information on Insect control contact your local County Extension Office

© 1999 by the Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System doing business as the division of Cooperative Extension of the University of Wisconsin Extension.

An EEO/Affirmative Action employer, University of Wisconsin Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming, including Title IX and ADA requirements.

References to pesticide products in this publication are for your convenience and are not an endorsement or criticism of one product over similar products. You are responsible for using pesticides according to the manufacturer's current label directions. Follow directions exactly to protect the environment and people from pesticide exposure. Failure to do so violates the law.