



PEACH TREE BORERS



Figure 1. An adult female peach tree borer (Clemson University - USDA Cooperative Extension Slide Series, www.Bugwood.org)



Figure 2. An adult male peach tree borer (Wendell Snow, USDA Agricultural Research Service, www.Bugwood.org)



Figure 3. Peach tree borer larva (Clemson University - USDA Cooperative Extension Slide Series, www.Bugwood.org)

There are two species of borers that attack peach trees in New York: The peach tree borer, *Synanthedon exitiosa*, which feeds in the trunk at or just below soil level; and the lesser peach tree borer, *Synanthedon pictipes*, which feeds, in the branches and limbs.

DESCRIPTION: The adult borers (**Figure 1.** and **Figure 2.**) are clear-winged moths with steel blue and yellow body markings. These insects are often mistaken for wasps to which they are not related. The lesser peach tree borer is a little smaller than the peach tree borer. The borers, or larvae of the two species, are difficult to tell apart, both being white and worm-like. Borers found at soil level may be of either species; however, the peach tree borer predominates here. Borers found in the trunk and branches are lesser peach tree borers.

LIFE HISTORY: The peach tree borer moths lay eggs on the tree trunks and in debris near the base of the trunk. The eggs hatch in 10-14 days, and the larvae (**Figure 3.**) immediately seek places for gaining entrance into the tree. Some peach tree borers may feed for two seasons before completing their life cycle development, but the majority requires only one year. They overwinter as larvae and do not appear as a moth until July. Emergence is completed by late August. The peach tree borer female is capable of laying 600 or more eggs and begins egg laying several hours after emergence. Fortunately, only a few of the larvae, which develop from the eggs, succeed in becoming established.

The lesser peach tree borer moth places her eggs in cracks and crevices on the margins of wounds on the tree. Here again, the eggs hatch in 10 to 14 days, but these larvae quickly move to the nearest injured area where they can gain entrance into the tree. The lesser peach tree borer completes its life cycle in one year. The partially grown larvae overwinter and resume feeding in the spring as the tree begins growth.

When peaches are in bloom the earliest lesser peach tree borers have completed feeding and begin to pupate. The moths emerge in late May and emergence continues throughout the summer.

INJURY: Both species feed on the inner layer of bark killing the cambium and girdling the conductive tissue. Individual limbs or the entire tree may be killed by either of these borers. The peach tree borer enters the tree at soil level (**Figure 4.**) and does not require holes or breaks in the bark for entry however, the lesser peach tree borer seldom attacks sound bark but enters the tree at a pruning scar (**Figure 5.**), canker, mechanically injured or winter injured area. Winter injury is the most common forerunner to borer injury.

Borer presence can be detected generally by observing gumming material mixed with frass excreted from the burrows. You should be aware, however, that gum secretions will occur at wounds on peach trees regardless of the cause of injury. To check for borers, scrape the gum away with a knife blade. A tunnel should

be evident if borers are the cause.



Figure 4. Gum exuding from the base of a young peach tree that is damaged by the peach tree borer (James Solomon, USDA Forest Service, www.Bugwood.org)

MANAGEMENT: Keep the trees in good vigor and avoid wounding the trees. This is especially the case with lesser peach tree borer, which seeks crevices for egg deposition so the larvae can easily enter the tree. Painting the lower 1 to 2 feet of the trunk with **white latex paint** can help prevent bark splitting and may also deter egg laying by the peach tree borer.

On peach, nectarine, & apricot:

For peach tree borer and lesser peach tree borer: If the planting has a history of this pest, spray the first week of June, first week of July and first week of August (trunk and scaffold branches). Contact your local Cooperative Extension office for specific insecticide recommendations. See labels to determine which crops a particular pesticide can be applied to; not all pesticides are labeled for all three crops.

Alternatively, in early June Isomate-L pheromone ties can be hung at 100 per acre or 1 per tree.

Prepared by Carolyn Klass, Senior Extension Associate, Entomology, Cornell University, 7/72, revised 11/81.

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) Bureau of Pest Management maintains a web site with a searchable database for pesticide products currently registered in New York State. Individuals who have Internet access can locate currently registered products at <http://www.dec.ny.gov/nyspad/products?0>.

This publication contains pesticide recommendations. Changes in pesticide regulations occur constantly and human errors are still possible. Some materials mentioned may no longer be available, and some uses may no longer be legal. All pesticides distributed,

sold or applied in New York State must be registered with the New York State Department Of Environmental Conservation (DEC). Questions concerning the legality and/or registration status for pesticide use in New York State should be directed to the appropriate Cornell Cooperative Extension specialist or your regional DEC office. Read the label before applying any pesticide.

AR: 11/2025