



PINE BEETLE: THE URBAN PROBLEM

Circumstances leading to the loss of pine trees in urban areas are very similar to those of rural forests. However, the consequences are quite different. In urban areas, lot sizes are often under one acre, the number of trees impacted is fewer, and access for tree removal is limited. In addition, there is no salvage value for the timber and the likelihood of slowing tree loss, let alone stopping it, is very small, while the cost of treatment or removal can be in the tens of thousands of dollars.



Initial observation of the affected trees usually coincides with the realization that a tree is dead, often evidenced by the lack of needles or slipping bark. Even when trees are identified prior to their death, the spread of the infestation can already be substantial. The first recommendation for managing an infested tree is removal, which, depending



upon the season, may further exacerbate the problem because beetles are drawn to the smell of freshly cut pines' sap. Pine beetles on residential sites have usually moved there from a nearby or adjacent property. Spraying options for the whole tree are eliminated due to overspray and drift issues in subdivisions. Trunk injection is largely ineffective by the time the infestation is discovered and is only recommended for very high value, featured trees, prior to infestation. Fell and spray is often a poor course of action in urban areas because the trees usually can't be "whole tree" felled, due to the height that

must be climbed and sectioned (climbing a dead tree is very dangerous) or removed by crane. Felled logs on an urban property present a fire hazard and are a safety code violation in most fire districts. Since there is no public assistance for any treatment or removal, the homeowner is left with the entire cost of managing the issue. Cost of removal and management generally increase if the problem is ignored.

Awareness of the location of pine beetle infestations near them and research based information relative to the management options available is the best defense a homeowner can have. The GFC provides publications and recommendations available through the Commissions website and social media. Homeowner association meetings can be arranged when the problem becomes subdivision wide. Public forums offered in coordination with UGA Extension Service can also serve to deliver valuable information relative to SPB management. A list of certified arborists and how to contract for tree removal is available on our website at GaTrees.org. Individual site visits by GFC staff are not conducted as they duplicate services offered by the private sector.