

Ash (Lilac) Borer *Podosesia syringae*

The Ash Borer, also known as the Lilac Borer, is a clear-winged moth. The adult borers mimic wasps in their appearance but have amber-colored abdomens which discriminate them from true wasps. The preferred hosts of this insect species are Lilac (*Syringa* spp.), ash (*Fraxinus* spp.), mountain ash (*Sorbus*) and privet (*Ligustrum* spp.) but other members of the olive family (*Oleaceae*) may also be affected.



Ash Borer Adult
Mark Dreiling, Bugwood.org



Ash Borer Larva
David Cappaert, Bugwood.org



Ash Borer Damage
Steven Katovich, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org

Life Cycle This insect overwinters as mature larvae in the heartwood of the host. Adults emerge from overwintering tunnels in late-May to early-June in southern New England but can occur over a large window of time depending on the local climate. Adults mate and females lay eggs singly or in clusters on cracks or wounds in host bark. Eggs hatch within 14 days and the immature larva bores into the tree. Larvae tunnel through the sapwood as they feed.

Signs of Activity Symptoms of the pest include irregularly-shaped entrance holes, often in cracks or crevices. Larvae keep their tunnels clean, so frass is often visible building up out of the entrance hole. Circular exit wounds are also visible above the entrance holes. Trees can often heal these wounds with callus tissue, leaving a scar as evidence of attack. Damage to trees occurs when the base of infested branches or the main trunk becomes swollen and the bark cracks and breaks away from the wood.

Management Minimizing tree stress and injury, especially in young host plants is the best prevention for these borers. The least amount of damage occurs to healthy, vigorous trees or shrubs planted in an appropriate site and maintained by mulching, watering and other proper cultural measures. Insecticide sprays can prevent lilac/ash borer attack, but sprays do not control borers already inside the plants. Spray treatments must be applied to coincide with the hatch of the eggs laid on the hosts. Contact your local Extension office for more information concerning chemical treatments.

References:

Lilac borer. University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

<https://ag.umass.edu/landscape/fact-sheets/lilac-borer-also-known-ash-borer>

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