

Peach Tree Borer

COMMON NAME: Peach tree borer
SCIENTIFIC NAME: Synanthedon exitiosa

DESCRIPTION: **Adult** is a clearwing moth, steel blue with yellow or orange markings. The female is about 25 mm in length, the male slightly smaller. The moths are day fliers and are easily mistaken for wasps. Fully grown **larvae** may exceed a length of 25 mm and are white with brown heads.



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PLANTS USUALLY AFFECTED: Peach, apricot, plum, almond. Trees that are stressed in any way are especially vulnerable.

TIME OF YEAR: Moths are most prevalent in July, August, and September. They lay eggs on tree trunks and foliage of sprouts. After the brown eggs hatch (in 9 to 10 days), larvae make their way to the base of the tree. They bore into and feed on the inner bark and cambium layer. Look for gum exudation at the base of the tree. The insects winter as larvae in burrows in the soil at the bases of trees. In the spring, they complete their growth and spin tough silken cocoons covered with their sawdust borings and soil particles. These are found about an inch below the soil surface in an upright position near the base of the tree from June to September. There is only one generation each year.

PROBLEMS CAUSED: Because the larvae feed on the inner bark and cambium layer, peach tree borers block the movement of water and carbohydrates in the tree. An infestation of borers causes tip and limb dieback and eventual tree death.

PEST IDENTIFICATION: Look for exudation of gum mixed with the borings of the larvae at the base of the tree.

CULTURAL AND MECHANICAL CONTROLS: Cultivate healthy trees. Remove and destroy any larvae found



in the tree. Dig them out with a knife, or crush the larvae with a wire run into their holes. Scrape away the soil from the top three inches of the main underground root to expose the pupal cases to the elements. Garlic planted around the tree reportedly repels the moths.

Another method is to apply paradichlorobenzene crystals around the trunk of the tree in September and October. Smooth the soil at the base of the tree. Spread the crystals in a complete band about 2 inches around the tree. Cover the crystals with a dirt mound to a sloping depth of several inches. This mound keeps gas in the soil and lets it enter the channels of the tree killing the borers.

Tree age (years)	Crystals (ounces)
Less than 1	DO NOT USE
1 to 3	1/4 to 1/2
4 to 5	3/4 to 1
6 and older	1

TRAPS: Place pheromone traps in trees in late spring - early summer to determine when moths are emerging from cocoons. Time of moth emergence may vary from year to year and depends on several environmental factors including soil temperature. Use trunk sprays only when you know that the moths are active and thus laying eggs on the tree. The trunk sprays will kill eggs and larvae before they enter the tree.

NATURAL CONTROLS: Common parasites include braconids (Bracon sanninoideae), bombyliids (Villa lateralis), and the egg parasite, Telenomus quaintancei. Predators include ants, chrysopid larvae, spiders, moles, birds, mice, and skunks.

No endorsement of named products is intended, nor is criticism implied of similar products that are not mentioned. Pesticides are poisonous. Always read and carefully follow all label instructions for safety, use, and disposal given on the container label.

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