

What is boring holes in my dogwood tree?

What are these holes in my dogwood tree's bark? If they are in lines around the trunk, suspect sapsuckers. If the holes are few, irregular and the trunk is swollen or bark is falling off, your tree may have dogwood borers.

Dogwood borer adults are a clear wing moth. They lay eggs on the trunks of trees. The young hatch and enter the tree through wounds or under rough bark. These larvae are white with pale-brown heads. The young borers eat the cambium under the trunk. This is the part of the plant that produces the water and food conducting parts of the plant.

The tree will not always die the first year. If the borers are not controlled, the tree may die in later years. The affected area will swell and the bark will fall off. You may see holes in the bark. The leaves on damaged limbs may turn red in mid-summer.

Once borers are inside the tree, you probably cannot kill them. Sometimes you can push a thin wire into the hole and destroy them. Dogwood borers overwinter under the bark as larvae. The adult borers emerge from May to September. Spray the trunks of trees that you want to protect.

We used to spray Lindane or Dursban for these pests. These are probably no longer available to most people. New regulations caused them to be unavailable now to homeowners. You can use Permethrin but expect to spray more often and to perhaps get less control. Read and follow all label directions. Begin sprays in Mid-May.

Manage this pest using cultural practices. In dry weather, water the tree with one inch of water once a week. Put a two to three inch mulch around the tree out to the edge of the dripline. Do not damage the bark or prune from May to September. The borers may be attracted to the resins that ooze from the wound. Spray all wounds with Permethrin. Do not use pruning paint or sprays.

Dogwoods are shade loving plants. Trees planted in full sun can be stressed and more susceptible to attack.

The information here was taken from a Virginia Extension Service article by Eric Dy. See the entire article at www.ext.vt.edu/departments/entomology/factsheets/dogborer.html