



Univ. of Ark. System Division of Agriculture
Photo: Jim Robbins

Crape Myrtle Bark Scales: They are here!

Weatherman Dave Brown, of Channel 5 News, mentioned that we have just had the seventh coolest July in history here in Shelby County. Well that's just fine with me! It has never felt so good to be out in the garden in July. While in my garden last month, I checked my many crape myrtles for the new insect pest that is taking the Southeast by storm.

The crape myrtle bark scale was first noticed in north Dallas, Texas in 2004. This insect has been confirmed here in Shelby County, specifically Germantown. The concern is that this new invasive pest is spreading at a very

high rate. I have been out on a few sites to see the damage from this pest firsthand.

It is very easy to identify crape myrtle bark scale. The adult females appear as white encrustations on small twigs and larger trunks. The crape myrtle bark scale is white to gray in color and is 2 mm in length. You will see black sooty mold on the bark of the tree, which will indicate that the scales are present.

Dr. Frank Hale, Extension Entomologist, will be working on an article for the fall Tennessee Green Times on this pest. He will also be working on developing a fact sheet that extension agents will be able to share with the public. Dr. Hale has stated that neonicotinoid insecticides have been successfully used to control this pest where treated. An example of this type of pesticide is Imidacloprid (Bayer Advanced Garden Tree and Shrub Insect Control).

It is very important that infested crape myrtles are identified and appropriate control measures taken to help slow the spread of this new invasive pest. If you think you have this pest on your property or see it elsewhere, please contact me (901-752-1207) so we can track the movement of this pest. This is definitely a pest that we will keep our eye on. The more we learn about them, the better we can control them.

Crape myrtles are a Southern favorite. They happen to be one of my favorite plants. I would hate to see this pest destroy their majestic beauty. Again, contact me if you see them. Until next time, happy gardening!



Christopher Cooper