

POPLAR BORER (*SAPERDA CALCARATA & DICERCA TENEBRICA*)



What is POPLAR BORER?

The poplar borer (*Saperda calcarata*) and flathead poplar borer (*Dicerca tenebrica*) are common insects in natural forest stands in our area.

The poplar borer attacks aspen, poplar and even willow trees. They prefer stressed, over mature, larger diameter trees with trunks in full or partial sun. Most of the damage is caused by the poplar borer larvae which eats the inner bark and sapwood, disrupting the flow of water and nutrients in the tree and providing access for disease pathogens. This damage usually will not kill a large native species poplar but spells the end for some cultivated varieties namely; Swedish Aspens and Towering Poplar.

The adult poplar borer causes minor damage by eating leaves and shoots but is not a serious problem.

Adult poplar borer beetles emerge from the tree trunks in summer (June to August). They eat tree leaves and new shoots for about a week, then they mate.

Adult females then cut notches into the bark where they lay 1 or 2 eggs. The eggs hatch in about 2 weeks and the larvae tunnel into and eat the inner bark of the tree. These young larvae mine into the bark for the rest of the summer and remain there for the winter. The following spring, they enter the sap and heartwood. The larvae continue eating until they mature, usually after 3 years, overwintering in their galleries, before maturing and exiting the tree.

They typically tunnel in larger branches and in the main stem down to the root collar.

Signs & symptoms of POPLAR BORER:

Poplar borer mostly affects aspens and other poplars but is also sometimes found in willows.

Currently Swedish Aspen with a trunk caliper of 4" or larger.

Open growing trees with trunks in partial or full sun are the most likely candidates for attack.

- Wet looking or sunken areas on the bark.
- Black stain below exit holes.
- Masses of frass (boring dust or shavings), mixed with sap near holes in the bark and on the ground near the base of the tree.
- Sap weeping down the side of the tree, staining the bark a varnish-like, dark brown color.
- Holes drilled through the bark with sawdust and frass at entrance or on the ground.
- Heavy woodpecker damage on your tree may also indicate the presence of these borers.
- If the bark is removed, larvae and their galleries can be seen.

Control of POPLAR BORER:

- Avoid planting Swedish aspen and Towering poplar on your property. Especially if neighboring properties have many Swedish Aspens planted already (monocultures make for easy pickings for poplar borers and other insects and pathogens) There are several other columnar tree species that you can plant with a much longer life span and a better resistance to insects and diseases.
- Keep your trees healthy (adequate moisture & fertility) Poplar Borer prefer stressed trees.
- Plant trees properly and without landscape fabric to reduce stress.
- Plant trees in groups so their trunks are shaded, and prevent injury to the trees.
- If you have a one tree with a heavy infestation – remove it and burn it.
- Many native insect predators and enemies of this insect will keep this species in check, Natural predators like woodpeckers, nematodes and parasites eat many of the larvae, and fungus diseases kill many more. However; you must encourage the diversity of trees and shrubs species in your property.
- There are a very few chemical and biological products to successfully control this insect.
- Insecticides are best applied around the time that the eggs hatch (June – August) to kill the adults, eggs and young larvae.

SUNSTAR NURSERIES LTD INFO SHEET:

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Referances:

<https://fctreecare.com/pest-care/poplar-borer.html>

<https://yardwhispers.ca/poplar-borer-wood-boring-beetle-that-attack-swedish-aspen-and-towering-poplar/>

https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=2360&context=extension_curall

<http://www.environment.gov.sk.ca/adx/asp/adxGetMedia.aspx?DocID=3630,184,121,104,81,1,Documents&MediaID=4176&Filename=Poplar+borer.pdf>

<http://www.greenlandgarden.com/pdf/tips/poplar%20borer.pdf>

