

Sherdec Tree Service

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European Elm Scale

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The European elm scale (*Gossyparia spuria*) is a small oval shaped scale. It is a reddish brown color surrounded by a white, waxy fringe. These scales will produce a blood-like red liquid when crushed. European elm scales spend the winter in bark crevices or at the bases of twigs inside their waxy covering.



By the end of June the females begin to lay eggs that hatch in only a few hours. The eggs continue to hatch through the end of July. The young crawlers occupy the undersides of leaves along the midrib. Once the feeding site is established the nymphs remain there until the end of summer, at this stage they look much like mealybugs. Before the leaves are dropped in the fall, the scales migrate to branches to overwinter. Only one generation is produced per year. European elms are the primary host, but all of the native elm species are susceptible as well. Asian elms seem to be resistant.

The scale causes injury by sucking out the nutrient rich sap that the tree produced as food for its self. The scale takes out much more fluid than it can use which causes an accumulation of a sticky substance called honeydew. The presence of honeydew is one of the signs of scale infestation. Sooty mold, a black powdery fungus, is often found growing on accumulations of honeydew, especially in the lower portion of the tree. Scales

cause premature yellowing, premature leaf drop and if the infestation is severe enough, wilting of leaves. This can often appear like, and be confused with, the early signs of Dutch Elm Disease. Damaged leaves may fail to drop in the fall and remain on the tree all winter. Twig die back may also occur by midsummer if the infestation is very severe. European elm scale can be treated with an insecticide spray just after the crawlers hatch.

A magnifying glass is required to see them on the undersides of leaves along the midrib. However, spraying is not a preferred method of treatment on most elms given their large, expansive canopy. A soil-injected systemic insecticide, like Merit, is more effective on such trees. Merit can be applied any time during the growing season. Several years of treatment, regardless of method, are required to control this scale.

