

WEEKLY NEWS COLUMN  
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## PINE NEEDLE SCALE

Observing the changes around you in the spring can be an excellent way to determine what steps and preventative measures homeowners can take to protect their plants or trees. For example, when the Vanhoutte spirea is blooming, it's time to take action to prevent pine needle scale infestation on pine trees and shrubs.

Pine needle scales are insects with piercing-sucking mouthparts. They withdraw fluids from the plant and their feeding can cause pine needles to turn yellow and fall from trees. Infestations usually start in the lower branches and pine needle scale feeding can reduce the growth and vigor of the tree. Heavy infestations look like white flecks on the needles and the pine needle scale is hard or armored with no honeydew production.

Pine trees and shrubs should be checked weekly in the spring for the presence of nymphs. Red eggs (up to 100 per adult female) are laid underneath a waxy coating produced by the female. The nymphs are red and emerge from under the dead female covering. The emergence takes place over a 203 week period in spring and the nymphs feed on last year's pine needle growth. The second generation nymphs appear later in summer. To scout, place double-sided tape around branches to capture nymphs. This helps to time insecticide applications or high-pressure water sprays. Check the tape weekly.

Heavily infested branches should be pruned and removed from the area. If pine trees or shrubs are heavily infested, cut them at the base, just above the soil and remove from the area.

Several methods of control may be used. High-pressure water sprays can dislodge the nymphs and are less harmful to beneficial insects. The nymphs are easier to kill with insecticides than adults because they do not have a protective covering. Contact insecticide applied when the nymphs are active in spring and supper will reduce infestation later on and should be made when the first generation of nymphs appear- when the Vanhoutte spirea is blooming. Spray with high-pressure water and/or insecticides every 7-10 days for a three week period suppress pine needle scale populations.

More information is available by contacting Kelsey Nordyke ([knordyke@ksu.edu](mailto:knordyke@ksu.edu)) at the Cowley County Extension Office, 620-221-5450 or Dr. Romulo Lollato at [lolato@ksu.edu](mailto:lolato@ksu.edu) or 785-477-4644.

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