

## *From The Treetops ...*



### **Cankerworms**

For the past 2 years cankerworms have caused some extensive damage to trees in Swift Current. They feed on most broad-leaved trees and shrubs, but prefer American and Siberian Elm, Manitoba Maple and fruit trees. The first signs of infestation are the appearance of small “shot holes” in new leaves and larvae can be found under the leaves. During severe outbreaks, trees and shrubs may be completely defoliated. Healthy trees will usually produce a new crop of leaves by mid-July. After three or more consecutive years of heavy attack, tree growth is slowed and branches in the crown may die back.

Cankerworm larvae are light green to brownish-green, often with a darker stripe down the back. They are sometimes called inch worms or loopers. Cankerworms spin “silken threads” that allow them to drop from foliage to escape predators and to lower themselves to the ground when full-grown. The “silk-thread” also allows cankerworms to be blown by the wind to other trees.

Cankerworms drop to the ground and burrow into the soil when full grown. Moths of the fall cankerworm emerge from their cocoons in mid-September and October. Spring cankerworms remain burrowed throughout the summer, fall and winter and emerge as moths from the end of March to mid-May. After the moths emerge, they crawl up the trees to lay their egg masses in the crown of the tree. The eggs of both the fall and the spring cankerworm hatch in spring. Control methods include:

### **Banding**

Female cankerworm moths are wingless and must crawl up the tree to lay their eggs. By applying a sticky barrier which the moths must cross, homeowners can help prevent eggs from being laid in their trees. Trees should be banded from late March to mid-November to catch the cankerworm moths both times they are emerging from the soil. It is important to band all trees in an area or else cankerworm larvae could move from unbanded trees to banded trees. Although the City will be concentrating their efforts on controlling cankerworms by spraying, homeowners can band City boulevard trees if they wish to do so.

### **How to Band ...**

- Wrap a 6 -8” strip of fiberglass insulation around the trunk about 4 -6’ above the ground.
- Cover the insulation with plastic – black looks better – and secure with duct tape
- Cover the plastic with a sticking agent. Tanglefoot or axle grease are recommended.
- Reapply the sticking agent regularly and keep band free of debris such as leaves and insects to ensure effectiveness.

Remember to remove the band between banding times to keep your tree bark in good shape.

Banding supplies are available at local garden centers and hardware stores.

### **Pesticide Control**

You can also spray your tree with products containing the bacteria *Bacillus thuringiensis kurstaki* (Bt.k.)

- Homeowners can use products containing Bt.k., sold under various trade names, on their own trees and on City-owned trees.
- Use pesticides that are specific to the problem, sold in small amounts, ready to use and apply the product only to the location where there is an infestation (spot treat)... Always follow label directions for proper application.

Homeowners can also hire commercial tree sprayers to spray the privately owned trees in their yard. The commercial sprayers must possess a Pesticide Applicators License approved by the City to spray any City-owned trees and they can only use Bt.k. It is illegal for homeowners and private contractors to spray any other products on City-owned trees.

The City of Swift Current will not be banding boulevard trees this year, but rather concentrating on controlling canker worms/tent caterpillars by spraying City-owned boulevard and park trees. City crews will be out spraying from mid-May to mid-June when the worms are hatching and feeding on trees. A commercial product called Dipel containing the bacteria *Bacillus thuringiensis kurstaki* (Bt.k.) is used.. Bt.k. affects only worms and is non-toxic to other insects, birds, animals and humans. The worms eat the product, stop feeding in 2-3 hours and die in a few days. **The City does not spray private trees.**

The Recreation and Parks Department would like to remind the public of the following items with regards to trees in Swift Current:

#### **Elm Tree Ban from April 1 – August 31**

Provincial legislation states that Elm trees must not be pruned between April 1 and August 31 each year. It is during this time that the Elm Bark Beetle is most active and highly attracted to fresh pruning or cuts. All citizens should also remember that it is illegal to store or transport elm firewood at any time. Elm wood should be disposed of at the City's landfill site, where it will be buried or undergo a controlled burn. Please follow these simple rules in order to keep your elm trees happy and healthy.

#### **Tree Pruning and Removal**

The Recreation and Parks Department would like to remind all homeowners and citizens that any tree on the frontage of properties could be a City Boulevard Tree. If homeowners are unsure about trees near their sidewalks, we encourage you to call the Recreation and Parks Department for verification. Please note that it is illegal to damage or remove city trees and can be subjected to a fine up to \$2,000. City Boulevard Trees can range from 3 to 15 feet in distance from sidewalks into properties.

**For more information, please call  
The City of Swift Current Recreation & Parks @ 778-2787.**