

# IMPACT

University of Idaho  
Extension

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## Locust Borer Control Program Saves Valuable Shade

### *The Situation*

The drought of 2007 in North Central Idaho has been hard on urban trees, most notably the Black Locust, *Robinia pseudoacacia*. This durable tree has been planted extensively in the Lewis Clark Valley since the 1930s. While Lewiston has an average annual rainfall of 12 inches; barely 4 inches had fallen by the end of an unusually hot July in 2007. This coupled with recent drought pressure created the ideal environment for a problem that would threaten the black locust: the locust borer, *Megacyllene robiniae*.



Like many plants the black locust is unable to fully defend against pests while under drought stress. In fact, the first to be compromised in trees is pest resistance. Trees under previous cultural, chemical, insect or disease stresses were especially at risk. The conditions of heat and drought that ensued in the Lewis Clark Valley in 2007 created ideal conditions for the increase in population for an opportunistic insect such as locust borer. By midsummer, branches as big as three inches in diameter were breaking out of trees to reveal tunnels in the heartwood created by the feeding of the insect. It was important to get the correct information to clientele within a short period of time.

### *Our Response*

To deliver information on the locust borer, University of Idaho Extension, Washington State University Extension and the City of Lewiston teamed up to develop and deliver information on the biology and control of the locust borer. A literature search was conducted to get background on the insect and control measures taken in other areas of the country. An entomologist working with WSU Extension in nearby Pomeroy had connections to research that helped us understand the biology of the insect. Not being the most beloved of tree species, it was found that many locust borer infestations had taken place, but the insect had been left to run its course. Insecticide labels were researched to determine courses of chemical control.

This information was packaged in a brief and concise format to accommodate the different

learning styles of our clientele. A brochure was created and sent to mailing lists throughout the area. Appearances were made on local television and radio stations. A 90-minute workshop was developed, organized and team taught by staff UI Extension WSU Extension and the City of Lewiston. Since adult emergence was the most vulnerable part of the insect's lifecycle, occurrence of this event was monitored and a news release created to let the community know when it had happened and described what course of action to take.

## ***Program Outcomes***

**Workshop:** The workshop, *Take Action against Locust Borer*, was held on August 8, 2007, just before adult emergence of the insect. Sixty-five people attended the 90-minute workshop, which addressed the prevention, biology and control of locust borer. Cultural practices aimed at keeping trees healthy and more resistant to the insect were also addressed. Many participants indicated that they had obtained a clear understanding and course of action to prevent and control the insect.

**Mass media:** On morning television spot (viewership: 1,000) and one television evening news item (viewership: 13,000) about locust borer were produced. These pieces focused on identifying the adult and responding with an appropriate spray program. News releases were distributed to newspapers and radio stations when the adults had emerged; urging people to take appropriate control measures.

**Publication:** A brief, trifold brochure was written, produced and hundreds of copies were distributed at the workshop and through area Extension offices. The brochure presented the biology, lifecycle and control of locust borer and contained an illustration of the adult to help with identification.

## ***For More Information***

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