Locust borer

Megacyllene robiniae
Order Coleoptera, Family Cerambycidae;
longhorned beetles, roundheaded borers
Native pest

Host plants: Black locust

Description: Adult males have antennae as long as the body, while females have shorter antennae. Adults of this longhorned beetle are approximately 18 mm long and black with bright yellow cross bands on the wing covers and thorax. The third band on the wings is W-shaped. Mature larvae are approximately 25 mm long.

Life history: Adults emerge in late summer. They are particularly numerous in September and can often be seen feeding on goldenrod flowers. They deposit eggs in bark cracks and wounds of black locust. Young larvae bore into the inner bark and overwinter. Larvae resume activity the following spring, until about mid July when they pupate. There is one generation a year.

Overwintering: Larvae in the cambium.

Damage symptoms: Damage on limbs and trunks may include both entrance and exit holes, sap stains, oozing sap and frass, and dieback. Structural weakening caused by larval galleries on limbs and trunks can cause trees to break in high winds.

Monitoring: In spring and early summer, and again in fall, look for holes in the bark oozing sap and frass. Look for branch dieback, particularly on young trees in full sun.

Cultural control: Promote tree vitality to minimize damage. Plant trees on good sites, out of full sun, and provide an adequate supply of water. Mulch the area under the drip line of the tree.

Chemical control: If adults are detected in September, spray the bark thoroughly with a residual insecticide.

Biological control: No reports of natural enemies

Plant mortality risk: Moderate

Biorational pesticides: None

Conventional pesticides: chlorpyrifos (nursery only), imidacloprid, permethrin

Locust borer adult. (166)
Photo: Clemson University Cooperative Extension Service