European Elm Scale

Elm branch dieback and shiny, sticky leaves

Name and Description—*Gossyparia* (= *Eriococcus*) spuria (Modeer) [Homotera: Eriococcidae]

European elm scale is often first noticed on urban elms when honeydew produced by feeding scales becomes a nuisance on parked cars or outdoor furniture. Branches on infested trees are typically blackened by sooty mold growing on the honeydew. Closer examination of the branches reveals female scales, which appear as gray or reddish brown discs surrounded by a white, waxy fringe less than 1/8-1/2 inch (<10 mm) long (fig. 1). Tiny, orange crawlers can be seen on leaves along main veins in summer (fig. 2).

Figure 1. European elm scale. *Photo: Whitney Cranshaw, Colorado State University, Bugwood.org.*

Figure 2. Newly hatched crawlers emerging from female scales. *Photo: Whitney Cranshaw, Colorado State University, Bugwood.org.*

Hosts—Elms, primarily American elm

Life Cycle—Eggs hatch in June and July from beneath mature female scale coverings. Summer is spent as tiny, yellow nymphs on the undersides of leaves. The insects crawl back to branches in late summer and attach themselves to twigs and branches. Female scales cover their bodies with a gray, waxy covering, and they overwinter in the second instar. Winged and unwinged males, when present, overwinter in small white cocoons. In spring, females grow and become a dark red-brown and produce copious amounts of honeydew. Reproduction can be sexual or asexual.

Damage—Honeydew from European elm scale feeding can be a nuisance. Yellowing leaves may drop early, and heavy feeding can cause branch dieback or death.

Management—Natural enemies include parasitic wasps on female branch scales and predatory plant bugs, mites, and spiders on leaves. On landscape elms, properly timed application of horticultural oils or insecticides is effective. Soil applications of the systemic insecticide imidacloprid have been very effective.

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1. Cranshaw, W.S. 2005. Cooley spruce galls. Pest Fact Sheet No. 5.534. Fort Collins, CO: Colorado State University, Cooperative Extension. 3 p.

2. Johnson, W.T.; Lyons, H.H. 1988. Insects that feed on trees and shrubs, 2nd ed. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. 556 p.