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EC57-1578 Entomology : Pine Needle Scale

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November 1957

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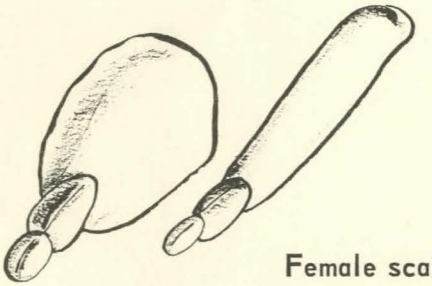
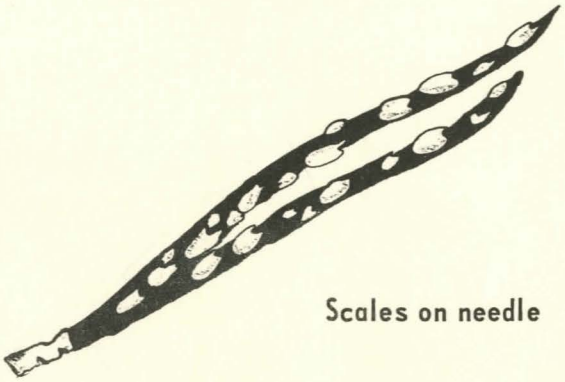
PINE NEEDLE SCALE

By BOB ROSELLE Extension Entomologist



Female scales



Scales on needle

DESCRIPTION: Female scales are snowy white, elongate, widening toward the lower end but may vary in shape according to the needle they are on. They measure about 1/8 to 1/6 of an inch in length. Males are narrow, straight sided, and about 1/25 of an inch in length.

LIFE HISTORY: Winter is passed in the egg stage, each female laying 20 to 30 small reddish-purple eggs under the old scale. Overwintering eggs usually hatch in late May or early June into yellowish-white "mite-like" crawlers which crawl over the needles for a short time, then settle down to feed and produce the scale. After they mature, eggs are deposited. There may be two generations a year.

INJURY: Pine needle scales infest pines, some spruces, hemlock, and fir. They may become so abundant on needles as to give a whitened appearance to the infested areas of trees. Feeding is confined to the needles where sucking of plant juices may weaken trees, cause yellowing of needles, defoliation, and sometimes death of small trees. Trees weakened by pine needle scales are more subject to attack by other insects and diseases.

CONTROL: Control is difficult. Light infestations can often be pruned out without harming the shape of a tree. General infestations may be sprayed with a dormant spray of liquid lime-sulfur at the rate of 1 part of lime sulfur to 9 parts of water. Moderate warm cloudy days should be chosen for applications of the spray in the early spring, before growth starts. Carefully timed sprays of Malathion against crawlers will likely make dormant lime-sulfur applications unnecessary.

Malathion sprays should be applied against young scales just after hatching. The exact time to apply sprays to control young scales can only be determined by examining infested trees every three or four days in late May and early June for the presence of crawlers. When they are first noticed, make an application of malathion at the rate of 1 quart of 57 per cent material in 100 gallons of water (2 teaspoons to 1 gallon of water for small amounts). The crawler spray should be repeated in 10 to 14 days. When a second generation is present, the eggs usually hatch during late July and early August. Malathion sprays should be used again at this time when crawlers are observed.

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