



Arborvitae Aphids

You need to know about this pest if you have a stately Arborvitae tree. This guy specializes in Oklahoma Arborvitae only!

Watch for a relatively large aphid with adults ranging up to 1/8 inch long. They come in green or brown and are roughly the same size. The brown is partly covered with a whitish, waxy secretion. Both have a broad body and long legs. The cornicles, (usually two projecting from the abdomen) are broad, short, and cone-shaped. The cornicles emit pheromones or defensive secretions.

Aphids seldom kill a shrub/tree, but when abundant they remove large quantities of sap, which reduces the vigor of the plant and can result in stunted growth.

Arborvitae aphids cause foliage to turn brown and kill branches. We seldom see serious damage in Oklahoma but it probably occurs in mild winters when heavy infestations are present for long periods. They produce large amounts of honeydew which can drip on cars, sidewalks, etc. and attracts flies, wasps, and other insects to infested plants.

Aphids can appear on arborvitae anytime between late October and early December (most commonly about the middle of November). They feed and reproduce whenever temperatures allow, probably producing several generations in mild winters. They can tolerate relatively cold weather, but at least part of the population will be killed if temperatures drop much below 10°F. Large numbers may be found as early as late January, but are more commonly found in March and April. Numbers usually begin to decrease in April and infestations disappear in May.

Before any insecticide application is made, check the tree for the presence of natural enemies and make sure that they are not already reducing aphid numbers. Natural enemies include ladybird beetle (ladybug) adults and larvae, green lacewing larvae and syrphid fly larvae.

Options for Control

Strong, durable plants can be sprayed with a forceful stream of water to dislodge aphids. Most will not be able to return to the tree after this treatment and the water will also remove recently deposited honeydew. This tactic can be used as often as needed. Pruning aphid-infested new growth can also be effective.

If a pesticide treatment is warranted, confine the application to only those plants most seriously infested; this will help conserve the natural enemy populations.

Spray with an insecticidal soap, or ultrafine horticultural oil whose label specifically lists aphids. Read and follow all directions on the container label and always wash your hands and face and any other exposed body areas with soapy water after using.



<http://entoweb.okstate.edu/ddd/insects/arborvitaeaphid.htm>

<https://portal.ct.gov/CAES/Plant-Pest-Handbook/pphA/Arborvitae-Thuja>

<http://ccenassau.org/resources/arborvitae-problems>

<https://extension.missouri.edu/publications/g7274>