

Meet the Beetles!

Twig girdlers – maybe a great band name, but they don't sing a happy song.

This fall, before you see the leaves come down, you may see small twigs covering the ground. From August to November those twigs indicate the presence of beetle pests referred to as twig girdlers. Twigs are girdled because the larvae from long-horned beetles are unable to survive in living twigs.

Adult twig girdlers feed on the tender bark found near the branch ends. While feeding they find a mate and the female deposits her eggs underneath the bark.

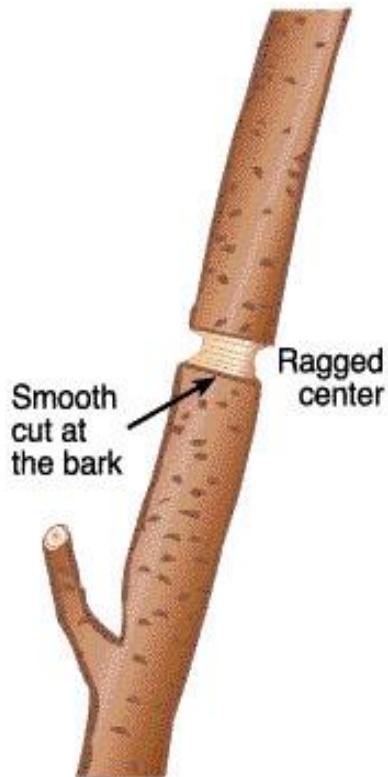
Then the beetle neatly girdles tree branches about the diameter of a pencil. The branches eventually will fall to the ground, packed with eggs from the adult twig girdler.

The female lays about ten eggs on each severed branch but may deposit upwards of 200 eggs. The eggs hatch in about three weeks and the larvae feed in the cut branch. In late summer, the larvae pupate and about two weeks later emerge as adults. There is one generation per year and adults generally live six to ten weeks.

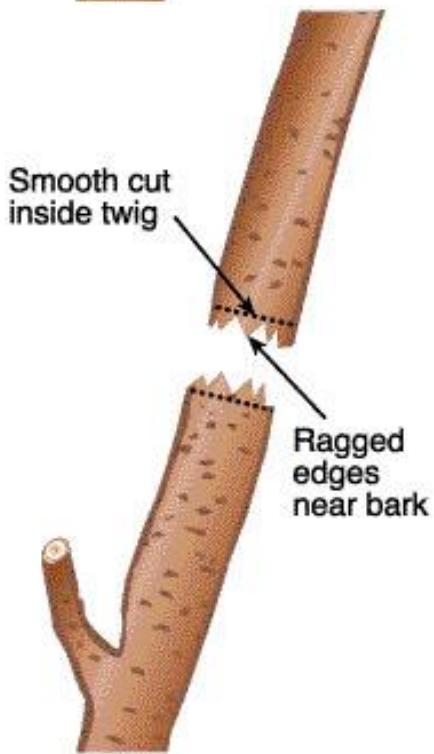


The adults are typical long-horned beetles that range from 1/2 - 5/8 inch long. They are grayish brown in color with a broad, ashy-gray band across the middle of the wing covers. The antennae are at least as long as the body.

Twig girdlers are commonly found on pecan, hickory, persimmon, and elm. They also attack oaks, honey locust, hackberry, poplar, dogwood, sourwood, and various fruit trees.



The twig girdler chews in a V shape from the outside leaving the center ragged and eventually falls off the tree.



Full-grown twig pruner larvae chew through the wood from the inside outward, leaving a smooth cut on the inside of the twig with ragged edges near the bark where the twig breaks.

Large infestations can result in a high percentage of twigs being girdled. Though this may reduce the vigor and overall appearance of the tree, the overall effect on the tree's health is not severe. However, the twigs are unsightly and do not fall all at once, so clean-up is a "long and winding road."

For control, no chemicals are needed. Homeowners should collect and destroy infested twigs and branches they find on the ground.

To complicate the issue, the twig girdler has a cousin called the twig pruner, whose job is to also make those egg-filled twigs fall to the ground.

Pruners will attack a wider variety of trees than girdlers including; oak, hickory, maple, chestnut, pecan, sweetgum, redbud, hackberry and even some fruit trees.

Unlike the twig girdler, the twig pruners attack the small limb from the inside. The adult female chews a hole in the bark at the leaf axil near a twig tip, then she will lay an egg. The hatching larva will then bore into the twig and feed on the wood as it tunnels down the base of the twig. In late summer, when the larva is about to pupate, it begins to make concentric cuts through the wood outward from the center and generally stops chewing when it reaches the thin bark.

The larva will migrate to the severed portion of the branch and overwinter as a pupa in the fallen twig or branch.

Management strategies for both these insects are similar and should involve gathering of fallen branches and twigs in the fall and early spring. In addition, some selective pruning can be done during the fall and winter if infested twigs can be identified. All infested materials and prunings should be burned or taken completely away from the yard. And then you can rest and "let it be"!

For more specifics, [read here](#).

<https://extension2.missouri.edu/g7276>

<https://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/info-center/common-pest-problems/common-pest-problem-new/twig-girdler.pdf>

<https://tfsweb.tamu.edu/TwigGirdlingBeetles/>

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