

## Oklahoma Pest Profile: Twig Girdler

For the last couple months, some unwelcome lodgers may have been making themselves comfortable in your landscape. They've likely been squatting on your property awhile, volunteering their skilled pruning services on your favorite pecan, dogwood or fruit trees. But don't despair...with a little knowledge, detective work and some yard sanitation this fall, you've taken the first steps in evicting these resident critters.



### What is a Twig Girdler?

Twig Girdlers (*Oncideres cingulata*) are a grayish brown,  $\frac{1}{2}$ " longhorn beetle with antennae as long or longer than the body. Adults emerge from August to October to feed on the tender bark of branch ends before they begin their telltale pruning habits. Selecting twigs from  $\frac{1}{4}$ " to  $\frac{1}{2}$ ", they chew through the bark in perfect circles, "girdling" the small branch, causing it to weaken and fall to the ground.

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So your first (and best) clue in spotting these freeloaders? Small fallen branches with precise woodturned cuts that look almost as good as your own. Why do they do this? It's probably not what you think.

### The Life Cycle

Really, the life story of twig girdlers is not much of a mystery. The adults lay eggs, the eggs hatch, the larva eat, grow, pupate into adults, the adults mate, reproduce, die...then queue up the next generation.

Twig girdlers just happen to cycle in an interesting way. The adult females deposit the eggs (eight or so per twig, up to 200 per season) into the soft wood or underneath the bark of the girdled twig, making the dead twig the protection for the egg gallery, the larvae food source (larvae cannot eat live wood), and the pupation chamber. Overwintering in the twig, the larvae grow in the spring, maturing as they eat down the center of the branch, forming a protective chamber of shredded wood fibers. They pupate there for 12 to 14 days from August to September, and chew an exit hole to emerge an adult. There is one cycle per year (although some pupae may not emerge until the following year). Then they mate...and do it all over again.

## Twig Girdler Hosts

The most common hosts for twig girdlers in Oklahoma are pecan, elm, hackberry, persimmon, honey locust, dogwood, oaks and some flowering fruit trees.

Twig girdler damage affects the fruiting area of pecans so therefore can impact production for the following and subsequent year. Seedlings can be stunted and disfigured. Ornamental trees may lose symmetry and aesthetic value resulting from the girdlers' volunteer pruning tactics.



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## Prevention and Control

Although natural predators do exist and chemical controls may be employed by pecan growers, proper sanitation is the best form of prevention and control for many homeowners. Removing and destroying fallen twigs containing overwintering eggs halts the cycle and lessens the population.

Oust these woodturning trespassers for good armed with knowledge, a keen eye and a fall cleanup strategy! More information on twig girdlers is available from the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service and others through the [links at the end of this article](#).

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## Resources

[OKState.edu: September Gardening Topics](#)

[Oklahoma State Entoweb: Twig Girdler](#)

[Oklahoma Gardening Video: Twig Girdler Cleanup](#)