

UPDATE ON TREATMENT OF DISEASED TREES ON PRIVATE PROPERTY

from Charlene Prickett

Sadly, some Mount Royal tree lined boulevards are looking a bit ragged this summer! Most of our majestic elms and many ash trees are under attack from insect pests which suck the life out of them. Without treatment, many won't survive. After wrestling with this problem for the past two years, City of Calgary entomologist Jim Watts is the voice of experience and the primary source of information for this tree update. A representative from City of Calgary Urban Forestry Dept concurred entirely with Watt's suggestions.

Pests don't respect property lines. Though the City of Calgary has treated virtually all elm and ash trees on City property in Mt Royal, untreated trees on private property threaten our lovely boulevard trees and nearby treated private property trees with reinfection.

There are two methods of tree treatment — topical application involves spraying various mixtures of dormant (mineral) oil, soap and pesticide on affected trees. Topical treatment only kills pests on contact. With the second method, systemic treatment, pesticide is injected directly into the tree and is delivered throughout the tree nutritional system. Systemic pesticide kills insects feeding on bark and leaves over the period of a year or more.

The systemic pesticide Confidor is again available in Calgary for commercial use due to the diligent efforts of Jim Watts who spear headed the emergency use registration of Confidor and experimental treatment of City owned trees over the past three seasons. Confidor has proven particularly effective on elm scale. It is not a threat to birds, squirrels, cats, etc.

Virtually all elms in Mount Royal suffer from some degree of scale. Those severely affected present blackened bark as though they've been scorched by fire. In a desperate attempt to survive, diseased elms try to produce leaves and small branches down the trunk of the tree rather than up in the canopy. If your private property elms were injected with Confidor last summer, no further treatment is needed this summer UNLESS your elms are in close proximity (next door or two doors away) to untreated elms. Because the reinfection rate from nearby trees is high, it is worth your while to interface with neighbours in an effort to get all elm trees systemically treated to put the problem down for good.

Timing for Confidor treatment is critical. It must be done by mid-July, but for best results, it should be injected by July 10 (before Stampede). Only one treatment per 2-3 years may be required. It begins to work within 48 hours, though a diseased tree may need several seasons and sufficient moisture to bounce back to good health. Although this pesticide is expected to become fully registered for use across Canada, there could be a time gap between the expiration of Calgary's emergency permit and total availability in 2008. Property owners who have not treated before, should treat diseased elms THIS spring.

Jim Watts is monitoring Mt Royal trees and is pleased with the state of most elms treated last summer on both private property and city owned boulevards. Elms were late leafing out this summer, but scale is substantially reduced. Jim assures us that mature elms take several seasons to recover from the effects of scale. While treatment can't restore dead branches, treated elms should recover even though the bark remains black this summer. It is important that recovering trees get sufficient water during the growing season.

Sixty-one Mt Royal residents joined a group treatment program last summer and enjoyed a reduced

group price for treatment. Owners of treated elm trees should check for the following good signs. On hot days, you should NOT see the mist of honeydew falling from the tree canopy. Patios, decks, lawn furniture, rock walls under the tree canopy should NO longer be sticky with honeydew. If you have pressure washed these areas, the dark colouration from falling honeydew should NOT reappear. If your treated elms are not at risk to reinfection from nearby untreated trees, your only chore is to keep them well watered this summer and fall. Water under the entire tree canopy regularly, right until freeze up. Deadwood should not be pruned off until November at the earliest. You should NOT see more deadwood appear!

The outlook for Manchurian and black ash trees is less optimistic. Ash trees affected by psyllid present distorted leaves which “cauliflower up” with little bumps. Like elm scale, these pests can kill a tree in just a few seasons and can reinfect neighbouring trees by riding the wind. Last summer, the City of Calgary completed Confidor treatment of most Manchurian and black ash trees on Mount Royal boulevards and parks, but Confidor treatment of ash trees was much less successful than for elms. For unknown reasons, ash trees, particularly mature trees, do not uptake the pesticide throughout the tree system as thoroughly as elms. Alas, Calgary has lost many ash trees. Jim estimates that systemic treatment may have saved only 25% of the ash inventory.

Jim suggests that untreated black and Manchurian ash should be treated topically as soon as possible with a spray solution of soap and 0.5% Permethrin, a pesticide approved by Health Canada. Ash trees treated with Confidor injections last summer should NOT be injected again this summer. Since the systemic Confidor injections require drilling small holes in the tree trunk, the repeat of that stress on a diseased tree two years in a row is unwise, especially since this treatment has limited success on ash trees.. If psyllid has reappeared on Confidotreated trees, Jim suggests they now be sprayed with the soap / Permethrin solution.

Last year ArborCare was the only local tree service offering Confidor treatment. This year there are a few other companies offering the service as well. ArborCare has again offered a group rate to Mt Royal residents, and the price is better than last summer. The cost of treatment includes a service charge of \$65 (down from \$85 last summer) which includes the pesticide application of one tree plus the cost of the Confidor at \$3.75 per inch of the diameter of the tree. Treatment of additional trees on the same property cost \$20 per tree over 6 inches in diameter and \$10 per smaller tree. Chemical costs for additional trees are calculated as above.

Group rate spraying (soap,0.5% Permethrin mix) for ash trees is \$85 service charge which includes the first tree. Spraying of additional ash trees on the same property cost \$20 per tree over 6 inches in diameter and \$10 per smaller tree.

Properties which require treatment for both ash and elms will be charged one service charge of \$65 which will include one tree. Additional trees are priced at rates shown above.

ArborCare treats three or more properties in the same trip to our community. Charlene Prickett will collect names, addresses and phone numbers of all Mount Royal residents wanting to join together for one of several treatment windows scheduled between June 19 and July 9. Each property owner will pay his own treatment bill to ArborCare and, as a part of this treatment schedule, will enjoy the reduced group rate. ArborCare will phone each resident to plan treatment, set up dates, etc.

To sign up for treatment, email name, address and phone number to Charlene Prickett at sales@charleneprickett.com. Call Charlene with questions at 244-6621. For questions regarding

treatment protocol, contact Bonnie Rogers at ArborCare, tel 273-6378.