

UI Extension Forestry Information Series

The Pine Engraver

Peter Kolb, with Ladd Livingston

Towards the end of summer it's quite common to see trees unexpectedly turning red. If those trees are ponderosa pine, you're probably seeing the work of the pine engraver beetle (*Ips pini*).

Belonging to a group of insects called bark beetles (so named because they spend most of their lives between the bark and sapwood of living trees) the pine engraver is rarely a severe pest. However, during periods of prolonged drought or in areas with poor slash management this small insect can cause substantial damage. Found statewide, it attacks all pines and sometimes spruces, though its preferred host is ponderosa pine.

The pine engraver beetle is 1/8 to 3/16 inches long and dark red brown in color. In spring it usually attacks green slash or damaged trees, avoiding healthy trees. The adult beetles bore into a suitable branch or log, making characteristic "Y" shaped tunnels between the bark and sapwood. Eggs deposited in these tunnels hatch into larvae which feed on the soft tissue under the bark for 10 to 20 days, after which they pupate. New adults emerge about 10 days later. If

sufficient slash or blow-down is available, the population can build up to levels dangerous to the surrounding trees. The second generation emerging in mid-summer can attack and kill live trees. Ponderosa pine with stems 5 to 6 inches in diameter are the most susceptible though the larger trees are also attacked. It has been estimated that the pine engraver only flies 1/2 mile in search of a host tree, keeping attacks on trees local.

The best ways to avoid problems with the pine engraver beetle are:

- Avoid green slash accumulation in the spring.
- Manage you woodlot to promote vigorous tree growth as beetles prefer stressed trees.

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Figure 1. Ips beetle

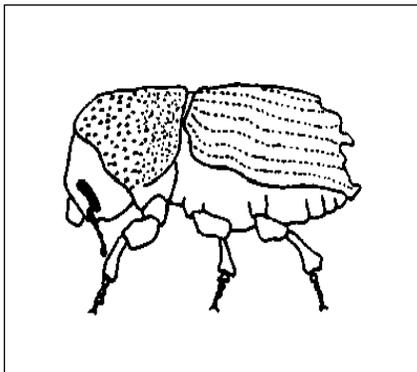


Figure 2. Ips gallery

