RESEARCH LABORATORY TECHNICAL REPORT

BARTLETT TREE EXPERTS
SCIENTIFIC TREE CARE SINCE 1907

Crapemyrtle Bark Scale

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The crapemyrtle bark scale (CMBS, *Acanthococcus lagerstroemiae*) is an exotic pest that causes damage to crape myrtles. Large populations can cause branch dieback and eventual tree mortality. This insect also produces honeydew (a sticky, sugary excrement) which can harbor a sooty mold infestation.

CMBS is native to Asia and was first detected in Texas in 2004. The known distribution of CMBS is from Texas east to Florida and north to Virginia. As its name indicates, CMBS infests crape myrtles which are one of the most common ornamental plants in the southern landscape and beloved for their summer flowering.

CMBS immature crawlers are pink (Figure 1) and emerge in spring. During this phase, they migrate to the plant's succulent new growth and feed. Adult females have a waxy, white coating. Two to four generations of CMBS can occur in a single growing season depending on the location. Populations of crawlers peak in early and late summer. Crawlers that become males cease feeding, but females continue feeding. Any stage of this insect can overwinter successfully across their current range.

Branch dieback and tree mortality can result from CMBS infestations (Figure 2). CMBS also produces honeydew, a sugary excrement, when feeding. Honeydew is hard to remove from cars, sidewalks and porches. Sooty mold can establish on honeydew and give the tree and other structures a black appearance. Honeydew can attract wasps looking for a sugary food source. It is important to manage small CMBS populations before they become large to prevent branch dieback and honeydew issues. Maintaining and encouraging plant health via root invigoration programs, appropriate irrigation and proper structural pruning will help crape myrtles defend themselves against CMBS.

Figure 1: Pink CMBS crawlers

Figure 2: CMBS infested branch