

# RESEARCH LABORATORY TECHNICAL REPORT



## Pear Thrips

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The pear thrips, *Taeniothrips inconsequens* (Uzel), is a tiny insect in the order Thysanoptera. There are over 600 species of thrips in North America, but only a few are serious pests. Most thrips feed on plants, attacking flowers, leaves, buds and fruits. Some thrips are particularly abundant in the flower heads of daisies and dandelions. Several species of thrips feed on fungal spores, and a few are beneficial predators of mites. The pear thrips is an imported species that was first found in California in 1904.

### Description

The pear thrips adult is dark brown and only about 1/20 of an inch in length. Adult thrips are slender-bodied with four narrow, feather-like wings. The adult female has a sharp ovipositor used to insert eggs into plant tissue. The young thrips are white or yellow and lack wings (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Larvae stage**



### Plants Attacked and Range

The pear thrips has been considered primarily a threat to fruit growers, but for many years now has been causing damage to sugar maple, red maple, and beech. Other recorded hosts include pear, apple, apricot, cherry, grape, peach, plum, prune, poplar, shadberry, willow and currant. Although the pear thrips occurs along the Pacific Coast, in recent years it has been reported as a pest in Pennsylvania, New York, and New England.

### Damage and Life Cycle

The pear thrips has a single generation per year and overwinters in the soil. The adult thrips emerge from the soil in early spring and begin feeding just as the buds begin to expand. They have sharp, sucking mouthparts, which destroy plant cells. The females soon begin laying eggs in the petioles of leaves and fruit and the midribs of leaves. The young nymphs begin hatching in two weeks and feed in large numbers within the opening buds.

Development is completed in about four weeks, and the nymphs drop to the ground. The feeding and egg laying of the pear thrips prevents normal leaf

formation by trees. Leaves appear mottled yellow to green-brown, dwarfed and cupped with brown margins. This effect often resembles late frost damage. Severely attacked trees will drop all their leaves followed by refoliation in several weeks.

## Management

Reduce the stress on susceptible tree species through good cultural practices including proper pruning, fertilization, proper mulching and irrigation during dry periods. Control of this pest can be difficult to obtain. Please contact your Bartlett Arborist Representative to discuss chemical treatment options for this pest.



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