Kentucky Division of Forestry

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FOREST HEALTH BULLETIN

Figure 1. Oak anthracnose

Figure 2. Cedar-apple rust

BE ON THE LOOKOUT THIS SPRING

INTRODUCTION

Spring weather brings many things from better moods to more colorful landscapes. However, spring weather can also affect pest and disease occurrence. Fungal levels can be higher with a cool, wet spring, and early warm springs can bring early insect activity. The following are a couple of things to consider as we look for spring to arrive.

FUNGI

Spring weather can vary from one year to the next, and with that, we can see varying levels of fungi throughout the year. Higher spring moisture can often lead to increased levels of fungi later in the season and into early summer. When this occurs, we can see more conditions such as leaf spots and anthracnose (Fig. 1) compared to dryer years. These fungi are always present at some level, but early moisture conditions usually drive their abundance. Other conditions to notice include cedar-apple rust (Fig. 2) and powdery mildew.

SPRING CATERPILLARS

Many of us know that caterpillars will be everywhere this spring, but others who don't manage or answer questions about pests sometimes forget from one year to the next. Winter and spring weather can affect caterpillar population levels and activity periods. Uncommonly low temperatures that approach freezing near hatching time may lead to mortality of young caterpillars and early warm weather can affect hatching time. Forest tent (Fig. 3) and eastern tent caterpillars (Fig. 4) can begin hatching as early as mid-March and be active into May.

TREE HEALTH

Spring is a good time to notice how a tree is doing and sometimes how it has been doing in previous years. Trees that have undergone significant stress in previous years and are in decline will often show more dramatic symptoms after they have begun to leaf out in the spring time. Thinner canopies will be more prominent and some may not leaf out at all. Trees that often appear to die suddenly at the beginning of the growing season were usually near death prior to that time. Although some conditions can cause sudden tree death, many times it isn't the case.

Figure 3. Forest tent caterpillar

Figure 4. Eastern tent caterpillar

PHOTO CREDITS

Figure 1— Robert L. Anderson, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org

Figure 2— Linda Haugen, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org

Figure 3— Herbert A. 'Joe' Pase III, Texas Forest Service, Bugwood.org

Figure 4— USDA Forest Service—Region 8—Southern Archive, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org