

White Peach and Prunicola Scales

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Scales are insects that use their needle-like mouthparts to pierce their host and draw food from nutrient-rich tissues just under the bark or outer surface of foliage. White peach scale (*Pseudaulacaspis pentagona*) and white prunicola scale (*Pseudaulacaspis prunicola*) are armored scales in the family Diaspididae. Armored scales form a hard, protective layer over their bodies while feeding making them more difficult to manage than soft scales that lack the waxy covering. Both scale species attach to stems, branches, and trunks, and are major pests of plants in the genus *Prunus* (stone fruits). White peach scale is a major pest of peach (*Prunus persica*) along with other woody ornamentals including cherry (*Prunus* spp.), dogwood (*Cornus* spp.), persimmon (*Diospyros* spp.), redbud (*Cercis* spp.), and many others. White prunicola scale also infests *Prunus* trees, but will additionally infest privet (*Ligustrum* spp.) and lilac (*Syringa* spp.), along with a variety of other trees and shrubs. Both white peach scale and white prunicola scale are distributed throughout the southeastern United States, along the eastern states to Maine, and in the Midwestern U.S. Both species are also present outside continental North America.

Description

Adult scales are the most noticeable life stage to monitor. Male and female scales are physically distinct (Figure 1). Females are covered with a secreted whitish, waxy layer which provides protection from natural enemies. This covering is composed of skin that she sheds as she ages, a wax secretion, and small pieces of bark that she incorporates into the covering as camouflage. Female scales are round in shape with an orange-yellow to red hue in the center. Adult males are oblong in shape and have a solid white color. Large clusters of males can give bark a fluffy appearance.

Lifecycle

These insects typically have three generations (but up to four) in southern areas and two or three generations in more northern areas. Generally, fertilized females

Figure 1: Round-shaped female scales with the orange-red hue in the center and oblong-shaped males



will begin laying eggs in mid-late spring and eggs will hatch, producing nymphs (or “crawlers”). The crawlers will settle after finding a suitable feeding site, insert their piercing/sucking mouthparts, and begin removing sap from the tree. As the insect feeds, it

produces the waxy covering over its body. Unlike females, males develop wings which gives them the mobility to find females.

Damage

Infestations of these scales usually do not result in tree mortality, but severe infestations are unsightly and will cause major stress to the tree, premature yellowing of foliage and leaf drop, and even branch dieback (Figure 2). Furthermore, trees experiencing major infestations become susceptible to other, more serious issues because of the stress imposed by the scale. Honeydew production and black sooty mold growth are not associated with armored scales, so this is not an issue with white peach or prunicola scale.

Figure 2: Infestation of white prunicola scale on a privet hedge resulting in spot dieback (right side)



Management

Close monitoring of these insects is extremely important and should be an integral part of any management program. Life stage can influence what treatments are available and how effective they are. However, there are many treatments for these scales including horticultural oil applications and other effective products. Please contact your Bartlett Arborist Representative to develop a monitoring program and learn about management strategies.



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