

Tree Talk

Bur Oak Trunk Damage

This winter we are starting to see similar tree issues that have been problems over the last few seasons. A common question being asked this time of year is why is the bark missing from my trees? Most of the time this is caused by squirrels feeding on the inner bark stripping entire branches and leaving them bare. The inner bark is full of sugars this time of year especially now that we are starting to warm up for short periods of time. Certain tree species seem to be favored such as Hackberry, Siberian Elm, Russian Olive, and others. Branches affected by squirrel feeding will yellow and die back during the growing season. This normally does not kill or affect the overall health of the tree.

We are also seeing more Bur Oak damage caused by the Downy Woodpecker feeding on a small bark insect called the oak bark scarrer. The woodpecker, which is a good natural predator of this insect, does a good job of removing the insect, but in the meantime it is damaging the tree during this process. Branches can be affected along with the entire tree being killed off from the damage the bird is causing. Since there is no good treatment for the control of the insect, bird deterrents are recommended. A sticky substance called 'tanglefoot' can be applied to the areas the bird is frequenting. This is meant to deter the bird from coming back. Sometimes paper tree wrap is temporarily used around the main trunk areas, but it is important to remove this paper once the tree starts leafing out in order to prevent girdling. Bur Oaks are still an exceptional tree for our area and should be used in diversifying the landscape.

Please contact me for additional information or questions at forestry@aberdeen.sd.us or the city website at www.aberdeen.sd.us

*Aaron Kiesz is the
City Forester
For the City of Aberdeen,
Parks, Recreation & Forestry Dept.*