

Bark Beetles in the Sierra Foothills: What Every Property Owner Should Know

Protecting Our Forested Community Near Yosemite National Park

The beautiful pine, cedar, fir, and oak forests that surround our community are one of our greatest assets. However, these trees can be vulnerable to bark beetles—small insects that can cause significant damage and even kill otherwise healthy-looking trees.

Understanding how to identify a bark beetle infestation and what steps homeowners can take to prevent tree stress can help preserve the health, safety, and beauty of our community.

What Are Bark Beetles?

Bark beetles are tiny insects, usually about the size of a grain of rice, that live and reproduce beneath a tree's bark. In California's foothill forests, several species of bark beetles attack pine, fir, and cedar trees.

Why Are Some Trees More Vulnerable?

Bark beetles are often attracted to trees that are already stressed due to drought, root damage, wildfire impacts, disease, overcrowding, or soil compaction.

Signs of a Bark Beetle Infestation

- Pitch tubes (small blobs of sap on the bark)
- Boring dust around the base of the tree
- Increased woodpecker activity
- Needles changing from green to yellow to reddish-brown
- Bark peeling away and exposing beetle galleries

What Should Homeowners Do?

1. Inspect the tree carefully.
2. Take photos of affected areas.
3. Contact a certified arborist.
4. Report concerns to the Association.
5. Avoid further damaging the tree until evaluated.

How to Reduce the Risk of Bark Beetle Damage

- Water trees deeply during extended dry periods.
- Protect tree roots from construction and soil compaction.
- Reduce overcrowding through selective thinning.
- Remove dead and dying trees when appropriate.
- Avoid damaging trunks with equipment.
- Maintain overall tree health.

Can Insecticides Prevent Bark Beetles?

Professional preventative treatments may help protect high-value trees, but they must be applied before infestation occurs and should only be performed by licensed professionals.

Fire Safety and Tree Health

Maintaining defensible space, removing dead vegetation, and monitoring tree health helps reduce both bark beetle impacts and wildfire risks.

Working Together as a Community

Protecting our forested landscape is a shared responsibility. By routinely inspecting trees and reducing tree stress, homeowners can help preserve the beauty and safety of our community.

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