

Why are the pecan trees dying?
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In July 2013, I was contacted by a pecan grower because he wanted to know why his pecan trees were dying. After ruling out several potential causes, it was brought to my attention by Dr. Jim Dutcher, an Entomologist with University of Georgia, that the prionus insects might be the cause. One pheromone trap was set on the farm that caught some insects that were confirmed as the insects in question. It is not known how wide spread this infestation is in the county.



Photo: Adult Prionus Beetle

Several pests attack the pecan trees. Two of them should be of concern to producers. The first one is the tile horned prionus insect. The adults are usually found in the orchard during May through July. The females lay their eggs below the surface of the soil near the pecan roots. The larvae bore the root and grow for 3-5 years. When the root is damaged, it affects the flow of water and nutrients in the tree. The trees begin to die from the top. The second insect is the obscure scale that cannot be easily seen by the naked eye. This insect feeds on the vascular system of the stem. It sucks the sap from the stem through its piercing sucking mouth part. This leads to die back of the limbs.



Photo: Pecan tree dying from the top

The control measure for the control of these insect are being developed. Trapping the adult male is one method of possible control, but it is can be used to determine the severity of the problem by setting up traps. The Extension office hopes to set some traps in pecan groves next spring to determine the severity of this problem.