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## Ambrosia beetles boring holes in freeze damaged fig trees

By Paul Pugliese for CAES News

Backyard fig gardeners may be seeing toothpick-like spines protruding from their beloved fig trees. This is a sign that ambrosia beetles are boring into the tree's stems.

Ambrosia beetles commonly attack weak or dying plants, such as fig trees that were damaged by the subzero temperatures last January.

### Healthy trees can withstand attack

If the plant is vigorous enough, the beetles may be drowned or forced out by heavy sap flow. If the host is weak or not producing large amounts of sap, the attack will be successful.

Ambrosia beetle infestations can usually be identified by dust protruding from holes bored by females excavating their galleries. The strings or spines of the "boring dust" may be up to 2 to 3 inches long, but are fragile and easily broken off by wind or rain.

The beetles are active during warm periods of the year, but most adult activity is observed in early March. They mate, lay eggs and rear young within the tunnels excavated by the females. There can be several generations in a year. They breed in stems that are 2 to 30 cm in diameter, although smaller branches are most commonly attacked first.

### They like other trees, too

All life stages can be found inside the galleries. When mature, the females leave infested plants and fly to new host plants. And they don't just attack fig trees. Ambrosia beetles are known to attack pecan, peach, plum, cherry, persimmon, oak, elm, sweet gum, magnolia, buckeye, crape myrtle and maples, too.

Adults and larvae bore into twigs, branches or small trunks of woody host plants, excavate a system of tunnels in the wood or pith, and introduce a symbiotic ambrosial fungus. The beetles are highly specialized and feed on fungi they cultivate on the walls of the galleries. Both the adults and larvae feed on the fungus. The introduced fungus and tunnel excavating damage and clog the plant's xylem (tissues that transport water), ultimately killing all or part of the plant.

### Prune or spray before adults emerge

Controlling ambrosia beetles is difficult. Heavily infested plants or plant stems should be pruned out and burned immediately. Insecticide sprays are of limited value after a plant is infested, especially if the host plant is already very weak or dying.

Insecticides must be applied before the adults emerge and move on to attack other plants. Insecticide applied to the trunks of surrounding plants may help reduce the spread of infestations to other susceptible hosts.



Ambrosia beetle damage on a fig tree.

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Using proper horticultural practices to keep plants healthy will help prevent future attacks. This includes properly fertilizing, maintaining proper soil pH and keeping the soil moist.

For more information on growing home garden figs in Georgia, see Extension publication C945 at [extension.uga.edu/publications/detail.cfm?number=C945](https://extension.uga.edu/publications/detail.cfm?number=C945).

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### 10 ways UGA is helping honeybees

Posted on 04/27/21 by Sara Freeland

University of Georgia faculty and students are working to better understand pollinators and the threats they face. Pollinating bees are vital to healthy crops and a thriving ecosystem, but are under threat of extinction from disease, pollution and other factors. Here are 10 ways UGA is working to help pollinators.

### Irrigation benefits both newly planted and established peach trees in UGA study

Posted on 04/27/21 by Ashley N Biles

While peach orchards are a common sight throughout middle and south Georgia — helping the Peach State live up to its name — peach producers need more than just the title to ensure that both long-established groves and newly planted fields are successful.

### UGA Extension celebrates Volunteer Appreciation Week

Posted on 04/19/21 by Sheri Dorn

Even in the midst of a global pandemic, volunteers have continued to make a positive impact for Georgians of all ages. Throughout Volunteer Appreciation Week April 19 - 23, University of Georgia Cooperative Extension is honoring thousands of volunteers who have dedicated their time to facilitate 4-H, Master Gardener and Family and Consumer Sciences programming on the county, district and state levels.

### Billions of periodical cicadas and their songs set to fill the spring air

Posted on 04/09/21 by Sean Montgomery

It has been 17 years since a set of billions of periodical cicadas emerged from their underground chambers and filled the air with boisterous buzzing and desperate mating calls.

### **Your lawn could help save the bees**

Posted on 04/07/21 by Maggie Narvil

Over the past few decades, pollinators have been in decline worldwide, which is concerning because 70% of crops used for human food depend on pollinators. Turfgrasses – used for most residential lawns – often take some of the blame for pollinator decline as they are known to be wind-pollinated and were thought not to serve as a pollinator food source, until now.

### **UGA student investigates why modern tomatoes have lost their flavor**

Posted on 04/07/21 by Austin Clark

Why have tomatoes lost their flavor? Why do some dishes call for ketchup when cooking with tomatoes? These are a couple of the questions that Qian Feng, a second-year University of Georgia College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences doctoral candidate, seeks to answer through her research.

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