

Problem: Obscure Scale - *Melanaspis obscura* (Comstock)



Hosts: Oaks, particularly pin, as well as pecan. Other species of tree sporadically attacked.

Description: Obscure scale is an armored scale that lives on branches and twigs of the host tree. Yellowing leaves are the first symptom usually noticed as the scale sucks juices from the plant. Though this insect will rarely kill a tree, it can cause branch dieback on already stressed oaks. Heavy infestations can also weaken a tree so that it is more susceptible to other problems.

There is one generation per year and eggs hatch in summer. Peak activity is in July but emergence continues throughout the summer. Scales are circular, 1/8 inch in diameter and a grayish color that blends in with the color of the host. Infested twigs often have a silvery appearance or may appear to have been dusted with wood ashes.

Recommendations: The first line of defense against scale is a healthy tree. Provide water during dry periods to avoid moisture stress.

The extended emergence period and the tendency of new crawlers to settle under the covers of mature scale makes control difficult. Dormant oils may not be effective as armored scales are well protected. The crawler stage is most often targeted. Numerous products are effective against these insects but repeat applications are necessary due to the extended emergence period. Representative products include horticultural oils, insecticidal soaps, permethrin (numerous products), cyfluthrin (Tempo, Bayer Vegetable & Garden Insect Spray), malathion and cyhalothrin (Scimitar, Spectracide Triazicide).

References:

1. [Obscure Scale](#), Entfact-432, University of Kentucky, College of Agriculture
2. [Obscure Scale](#), Penn State Entomology Fact Sheet

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