

Oystershell Scales

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The oystershell scale, *Lepidosaphes ulmi*, is about 1/8 inch (3 mm) long, or less, and is shaped like an oyster or mussel shell. The female is somewhat larger than the male. These insects are brownish, sometimes very dark brown with grayish areas. The insect attacks a variety of plants, including trees (fruit and shade), shrubs, and other plants. It is widely distributed. Scales are generally found on trunks, branches, and twigs, but also on leaves, fruit, and other plant parts. Infestations are usually limited to certain plant parts, at first. Scales may be found in high numbers. Scales damage plants by sucking sap. Infested plant parts or plants may have off-color foliage. Honeydew is usually absent. Seriously infested plants may die.

Biology

Oystershell scale is an armored scale. Each insect lives under a scale or shell made of wax and other material. By fall the insects are mature, and each female has up to 100 white eggs under its cover. Adults eventually die, and the eggs pass the winter under the covers. Eggs begin to hatch about May-June. These tiny crawlers move about in the plant and crawl to other plants, or birds and other animals may move them about. Soon they stop moving, begin feeding, form covering, and remain stationary for the rest of their lives. By fall they have matured, they lay eggs, and complete their life cycle.

Parasites and predators attack oystershell scales. Though they can reduce heavy scale populations, they generally do not do so soon enough to prevent plant damage.

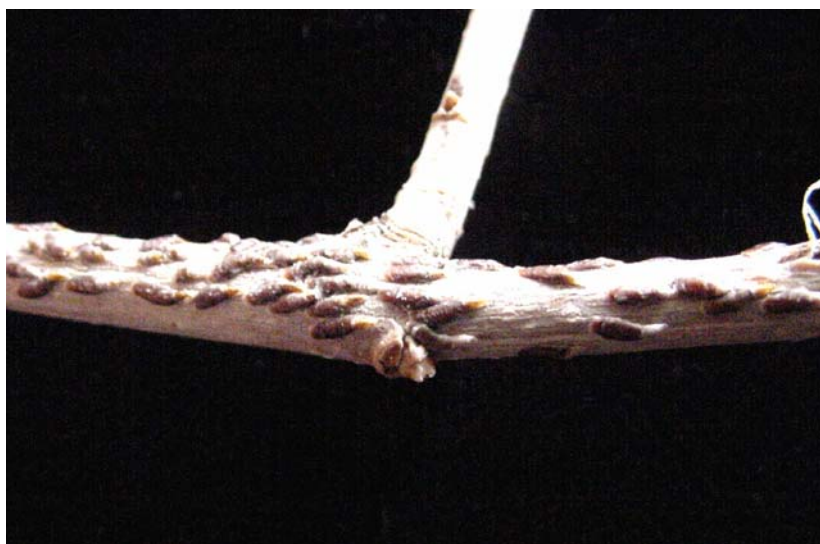


Fig. 1. Oystershell scales. By Brett M. Johnson.

Management: Refer to the Pacific Northwest Management Handbook or the WSU Hortsense webpage (<http://pep.wsu.edu/hortsense>) for insecticides currently registered for use during the crawler stage. Spraying after the scale covering has formed will be largely ineffective. Follow all label directions and precautions carefully.