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En 82C
no. 127



CIRCULAR No. 127.

Issued December 7, 1910.

United States Department of Agriculture,

BUREAU OF ENTOMOLOGY.

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INSECT INJURIES TO THE WOOD OF DYING AND DEAD TREES.^a

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Timber dying from insect attack and other causes, including fire, disease, storms, etc., is attacked by certain wood-boring insects which extend their burrows through the sound sapwood and heartwood, and thus contribute to the rapid deterioration and decay of a commodity which otherwise would be available commercially during periods of from one to twenty years or more after the death of the trees, depending on the species of trees and on the character of the product desired. This loss often amounts to from 25 to 100 per cent during the period in which the dead timber would otherwise be almost as valuable as if living.

CONIFEROUS TREES.

Sawyers.—One of the most striking examples of the destruction or deterioration of the wood of dying and dead timber, familiar to all lumbermen, is the injury to fire-killed and storm-felled pine, fir, spruce, etc., caused by boring larvæ known as “sawyers.” These borers hatch from eggs deposited by the adult beetles in the bark of the dying trees, and after feeding on the inner bark for a time they enter the solid wood and extend their large burrows deep into the heartwood. Fire-killed white pine is especially liable to this injury, and is often so seriously damaged within three or four months during the warm season as to reduce the value of the timber 30 to 50 per cent. The shortleaf, loblolly, and longleaf pines of the Southern States are

^a Revised extracts from Bulletin No. 58, Part V, Bureau of Entomology, U. S. Department of Agriculture, 1909.

damaged to a somewhat less extent, but instances are known in which more than one billion feet of storm-felled timber within limited areas were reduced in value 25 to 35 per cent within three months after the storm. The fire-killed and insect-killed sugar pine, silver pine, and yellow pine of the western forests are also damaged in a similar manner and the value of the product greatly reduced within a few months after the trees die. The aggregate losses from this secondary source in the coniferous forests of the entire country contribute largely to the annual waste of millions of dollars' worth of forest products which otherwise might be utilized.

Ambrosia beetles.—Wood-boring insects of another class, known as timber beetles or ambrosia beetles, cause pinhole defects, principally in the sapwood, although some of them extend their burrows into the heartwood. These insects make their attack in the early stage of the declining or dying of the tree, or before the sapwood has materially changed from the normal healthy condition, and often in such numbers as to perforate every square inch of wood. Thus the wood is not only rendered defective on account of the presence of pinholes, but the holes give entrance to a wood-staining fungus which causes a rapid discoloration and produces still further deterioration of the product.

The sapwood of trees dying from the attack of other insects or from fire, storm, or other causes is often reduced in value 50 per cent or more, and in some cases the value of the heartwood is reduced in a like manner from 5 to 10 per cent.

Pinhole borers in cypress.—An example of the destructive work of insects which attack dying and dead trees is found in the cypress in the Gulf States, where these trees are deadened by the lumbermen and left standing several months, or until the timber is sufficiently dry to be floated. Upon investigation it was found that trees deadened at certain seasons of the year were attacked by the ambrosia beetles, or pinhole borers, and that in some cases millions of feet of timber had been reduced 10 to 25 per cent or more in value.^a

HARDWOOD TREES.

Roundheaded borers, timber worms, and ambrosia beetles.—The principal damage to dying and dead hardwood trees is caused by certain roundheaded wood-borers (Cerambycidae) with habits similar to the sawyer, by the timber worms mentioned as damaging living timber, and by ambrosia beetles having habits similar to those that attack the sapwood and heartwood of conifers. All of the hardwoods suffer more or less, but the greatest damage is done to the wood of hickory,

^a For methods of preventing pinhole injury to girdled cypress see Circular No. 82 of the Bureau of Entomology, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

ash, oak, and chestnut, which are often reduced in value 10 to 25 per cent or more within the period in which it would otherwise remain sound and available for commercial purposes.

PREVENTION OF INJURY TO DYING AND DEAD TREES.

A large percentage of the injury to the wood of insect, fire, and lightning killed trees and those killed or dying from injuries by storms, disease, etc., can be prevented as follows:

(1) By the prompt utilization of such timber within a few weeks or months after it is dead or found to be past recovery.

(2) By removing the bark from the merchantable portions of the trunks within a few weeks after the trees are dead (the work to be done either before or after the trees are felled).

(3) By felling the trees and placing the unbarked logs in water.

(4) By the adoption of a system of forest management which will provide for the prompt utilization of all trees which die from any cause.

Approved:

JAMES WILSON,
Secretary of Agriculture.

WASHINGTON, D. C., *October 7, 1910.*

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