

TO SPRAY OR NOT TO SPRAY?

Our Timberridge Ponderosa have an advantage over the Ponderosa in the forest because our diligent residents have been providing supplemental water to their trees, making them less stressed than the forest Ponderosa. Our “rule of thumb” on watering Ponderosa is, “Don’t let them go more than three weeks without some moisture”. If Nature provides the moisture – that’s great! If she doesn’t, then its up to us to deploy the soaker hoses and supply that moisture to our trees. Pray for lots of snow and rain!!

I received a letter, starting with “Dear Timberridge Homeowner”, urging me to have my Ponderosa treated with an insecticide to “win some battles in the bark beetle fight”. From that salutation, I would assume that all Timberridge residents received the same letter. Later in the letter is the statement, “There are at least two good chemical alternatives for treatment of trees infested with bark beetles”. Folks, all the arborists, the entomologists, the forestry department and the University of Arizona experts have stated, unequivocally, that there is NOTHING you can do to save a Ponderosa that has become infested with the bark beetle! I called the company that sent the circular and asked about this assertion. The person to whom I spoke said. “Of course we can’t guarantee anything, but we’ll sure give it a try!”. Just whom should we believe---all the experts, or the person who just wants to “give it a try”?

This same company offers a service to spray your Ponderosa to prevent the beetle infestation. Although the forestry department does use a spray of Sevin SL to treat high-value Ponderosa near their campgrounds, this insecticide is a special formulation that must be applied by licensed operators with the correct equipment. So, if you decide to have some of your Ponderosa sprayed, make sure that the operator will spray only the trunk and limbs greater than 4 inches in diameter, not the needle canopy. Also, the spray should not be applied with a high-pressure sprayer by someone on the ground, but by an operator on a lift (“Cherry Picker”) to raise him up into the canopy, to minimize the overspray, which could contaminate neighbor’s homes, cars, kids, pets, etc. I have heard that there is a company in Flagstaff whose operators actually climb the Ponderosa, with ladders and ropes, and apply the insecticide with a backpack sprayer. That procedure really will minimize the overspray and would certainly be preferred even to the operator on a lift

For those of you who have decided to have some of your Ponderosa sprayed, allow me to quote from the document provided by the manufacturers of Sevin SL:

“HAZARDS TO HUMANS (AND DOMESTIC ANIMALS). CAUTION. HARMFUL IF SWALLOWED, ABSORBED THROUGH THE SKIN, INHALED, OR IN EYES. Avoid breathing vapors or spray mist. Avoid contact with eyes, skin or clothing. Keep out of reach of children and domestic animals. OVEREXPOSURE MAY CAUSE: Salivation, watery eyes, pinpoint eye pupils, blurred vision, muscle tremors, difficult breathing, excessive sweating, abdominal cramps, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, weakness, headache. IN SEVERE CASES CONVULSIONS, UNCONSCIOUSNESS AND RESPIRATORY FAILURE MAY OCCUR. SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OCCUR RAPIDLY FOLLOWING OVEREXPOSURE TO THIS PRODUCT. This product is extremely toxic to aquatic and estuarine invertebrates. Do not apply directly to water, or to areas where surface water is present. Do not apply when weather conditions favor drift from area treated. This product is highly toxic to bees exposed to direct treatment or residues on blooming plants. Do not apply this product or allow it to drift to blooming plants if bees

are visiting the treatment area. Do not apply this product in a way that will contact other persons, either directly or through drift. The area being treated must be vacated by unprotected persons. Keep unprotected persons out of treated areas until sprays have dried.”

I, personally, do not plan to have any of my Ponderosa sprayed, for the reasons that I outlined in the last Timberridge Newsletter.