

# Ask An Arborist™ Quick Reference: Bronze Birch Borer

## A Birch Lover's Greatest Nemesis: Bronze Birch Borer

No insect is as damaging to birch trees as the bronze birch borer, *Agrilus anxius*. The larvae feed on a birch tree's cambium layer (just beneath the bark). As the larvae feed, they tunnel laterally in a zigzag pattern, girdling branches and causing them to suddenly wilt and die. As progressive generations of borers feed on the tree, they eventually make their way to the trunk. Once the main trunk has been girdled, the entire tree dies.

Adult borers emerge via D-shaped exit holes (fig. 1) in the tree's trunk in May. Don't strain yourself trying to locate an adult borer, though. The slender, 3/8" to 1/2" long, dark olive-bronze insects (fig. 2) are rarely observed due to their secretive behavior and rapid flight ability. The first step toward preventing a bronze birch borer infestation is to minimize your birch tree's stress (adult borers are attracted to a stressed tree). Birch trees prefer a moist, shaded environment. Therefore, be certain to water birch trees well -- especially during times of drought -- and maintain a layer of mulch beneath the tree. In addition, proactive treatments are available to kill adult borers and emerging larvae.

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1. Exit hole
2. Adult bronze birch borer

