Ambrosia Beetle Trapping Results
On Monday April 7, our alcohol baited Lindgren traps had no ambrosia beetles. It was still too cold for activity yet. By Thursday morning, one Xyleborinus saxesenii was found. This one most often shows up shortly before Xylosandrus germanus. With the hot weather this weekend, look closely for the beetles in traps and for wet areas on trunks and branches. It is a good time to treat when you see wet areas. Onyx (nursery and landscape) and Astro (landscape) can be applied to the trunks for preventative control.

Velvet Mite
Bryan Lilly, Natural Elements LLC, found a bright red mite in a customer’s landscape. This mite is a Thrombium mite in the Thrombidiidae family. It usually prefers moist areas, and we have had plenty of moisture in landscapes this spring. It is a generalist predator that feeds on a wide range of insects. This mite is eye catching with its bright color and large size that lends itself to being photographed.

Velvet mite
Photo: William M. Ciesla, Forest Health Management International, Bugwood.org
Vole Damage
By: Stanton Gill
Back in the winter, we put out a special announcement that vole activity may be up in 2014. Fruit researchers at the Adams County Experiment Station reported that the vole population tends to be cyclic, and it was predicted that this year will be the high point in the population trend which occurs about every 4 years. Voles are an important source of food for many predators, including snakes, hawks, owls, coyotes, weasels, and foxes. Mortality rates for voles are very high during the warm part of the season. Life expectancy in the wild often does not exceed 2 months during the growing season. When there is a lot of snow cover, more survive because of lack of predation and some live as long as 16 months. Occasionally, high vole populations last about a year before crashing. These peaks occasionally result in severe damage to crops and landscape plants.

The frequent and long lasting snow cover in the winter gave perfect protection for voles to wander about, without fear of predators, in the landscape and feed at the base of woody plants. We are starting to receive emails and calls reporting damage showing up on plant material from vole feeding.

Voles may gnaw on trees and shrubs up to the height that snow accumulates. Individual tooth marks (about 1/16-inch wide and approximately ⅜-inch long) may be visible on the wood after winter vole damage. The gnawing marks left by voles are irregular in appearance and at various angles. In contrast, rabbits leave tooth marks that are about ⅛-inch wide and very regular. Pine voles, and occasionally meadow and prairie voles, tunnel belowground and feed on roots of trees and shrubs. Heavily damaged plants just drop foliage or fail to leaf out.

There is not much that can be done now other than removed damaged plant material. Predator activity is increasing at this time of year and should reduce populations. Cats are great predators of voles in a yard, so invite the neighbor’s cat over to hang out and feed on voles.

Termites in Mulch
Landscape Mulches and Subterranean Termites (Originally Published in 2003 Report)
By: Catherine Long, Former Graduate Student, University of Maryland, College Park

Like daffodils and dogwoods, fresh mulch is a harbinger of spring. Whether it’s traditional favorites like shredded hardwood and pine bark or specialty products like pine straw and cedar bark, gardeners and landscapers depend on organic mulches to conserve water, reduce weeds, and give gardens a tidy, orderly appearance. Subterranean termites are notorious for tunneling into wood items that are in direct contact with the soil, such as planters, fences, and trellises, and gaining access to homes via these exterior fixtures. Homeowners, mindful of this well-earned reputation, often question whether wood and bark mulches can attract and support foraging termites. Field research at the University of Maryland, College Park, indicates that organic mulches do not attract termites to the underlying soil, nor will the termites consume mulches in any great quantity. Termites have been observed within newly purchased bags of moist mulch, as well as bags that had been allowed to sit undisturbed for a while. The warm, wet environment of these full bags is ideal for the termites, but such conditions do not exist when the mulch is applied to its recommended depth of 3-4 inches. However, foraging termites can travel within the mulch layer and could theoretically use the mulch as a bridge up over a termiticide treatment around a foundation and into a home. For this reason, it is recommended that a band of bare soil be left around foundations. Surprisingly, even pea gravel perimeters should be avoided. Termites have been shown to feed more actively at resources beneath inorganic gravel mulches, presumably because gravel and stone mulches create a cool, moist, “shadow” underground where the insects can take refuge during the heat of summer.
Hungry Deer
We are receiving emails and phone calls about deer damage continuing into the spring. It has taken such a long time to warm up this spring that many of the weeds on which deer feed have been slow to pop up in the landscape. The hungry deer, lacking their normal food sources, are foraging heavily on landscape plants. The feeding on arborvitae, taxus, Leyland cypress, and azaleas is especially heavy in 2014. We have several reports of deer moving out to lawn areas browsing on the grass as it greens up. In some areas it looks like cows feeding in lawns. Normally, deer are active in early morning and early evening, but lately they have been spotted in broad daylight feeding on the lawns.

This spring, many landscape companies have been planting pansies, violas, and dianthus to replace the plants that died due to the dreadful winter. All three of these plants are delicacies to deer. To protect from deer feeding, some landscape companies install metal hoops over the beds and place bird netting over the planting bed. The hoops keep the netting off the plants so the deer cannot reach the plants growing underneath. The good news is that now that the temperature is warming up, the weeds will start growing and the deer should move to the weeds. We should start to see less damage to plantings in landscapes. One of the exceptions is hosta which deer love to forage on regardless of the time of year. It was a tough winter for everyone this year and the deer were no exception. When it is tough to find food sources, they will cause a fair amount of damage to plants.

Fern Scale on Mondo Grass
Monitor mondo grass and liriope for fern scale. It does well in the south, but is also adapted to our area. When feeding on liriope and mondo grass the scale causes yellow spots on the foliage at the feeding sites. Crawler emergence coincides with new growth emerging from the liriope in May. A second generation has been observed with crawlers present in August and September. The second generation scale appear to establish in the base of the mondo grass and liriope plants.

**Control:** Cut off infested foliage in early spring and remove it from the landscape. Treat with a systemic insecticide or apply pyriproxyfen (Distance) or buprofezin (Talus) and 0.5 – 1% oil when the crawlers emerge in May.
Winter Damage
We received photos of *Viburnum awabuki* ‘Chindo’ that were killed over the winter. The plants were planted last spring. This viburnum is a Zone 7 plant so it is not surprising that it was killed this year.

European Pine Sawfly
Nick Scaletta, Bartlett Tree Experts, found that European pine sawfly have hatched in NW DC by April 6.

**Monitoring:** Larvae are gray green. Look for them on two and three needle pines.

**Control:** Squishing works well or remove growth with clustering larvae. Conserve (spinosad) can be applied to foliage.

Beneficial of the Week
By: Paula Shrewsbury

**Pollinators are busy!**
Although it is a few weeks later than in the past years the Mason bees started to emerge from the bee tubes and holes drilled in firewood (see image) last Saturday. Mason bees are in the family Megachilidae and referred to as solitary bees. They are well known for the pollination benefits they provide and are some of the earliest pollinators of the season. Males emerge first and females emerge a few days later. This phenomenon, called protandry, is relatively common in the world of insects. It seems that female mason bees are a highly sought after “commodity” and males that emerge early in a season are more likely to find and secure mates. Once a male and female mate, the male then remains on the females back and fights off other males that would also like to mate with his partner. This “guarding behavior” ensures sperm from the original male are used by the female. It is also quite entertaining to observe. Mason bees provide valuable ecosystem services by pollinating a variety of native and non-native flowering plants, many of which are fruits that we consume or flowers of plants.
Winter has broken and in the last 7 days lesser celandine has emerged which has resulted in several phone calls about it. It is almost a month later than last year in appearance. Lesser celandine, *Ranunculus ficaria* L., also known as fig buttercup and pilewort, is a perennial, flowering, herbaceous plant that is currently in bloom in many areas. This spring ephemeral arises early in the season, often near forest fringe areas and creates a dense carpet, thus preventing native ephemerals that include bloodroot, wild ginger and others from surviving. The dense growing pattern makes this plant an invasive weed that competes and eliminates native understory plant species. This plant may be misidentified as marsh marigold, *Caltha palustris*, which does not produce the tuber that is found on lesser celandine. It will also compete quite well with desired species of turf and will need to be controlled.

This plant has a basal rosette of dark green and shiny, stalked, leaves that are heart to kidney shaped. The yellow flowers have eight petals (rarely more) and arise above the leaves on a delicate stalk. The center of the flower is slightly darker in color. Most flowering occurs in this region from March through May. The plant has pale cream colored bulblets that occur along the stem axils that become noticeable with close observation after the flowering period is complete. These bulblets make mechanical removal difficult. Lesser celandine spreads primarily by vegetative means through abundant tubers and bulblets.

Control of lesser celandine is difficult. Manual methods can achieve success with small patches, but will take careful removal of all bulblets and removal from the site to either a landfill or other means of destruction. Chemical control can be achieved using glyphosate (Rodeo is labeled for wetland areas) products early in the
The tubers on lesser celandine are one of the ways this plant spreads. This invasive plant has yellow flowers and kidney-shaped leaves.

**Plant of the Week**  
**By: Ginny Rosenkranz**

*Pieris japonica*, Japanese pieris, is an evergreen shrub that is slow to grow but can reach a height of 9-12 feet, especially if it is planted in partial shade with organically rich, acidic soils. The addition of the compost to the soil usually helps keep the soil moist, but well drained. The growth habit is upright to slightly spreading in tiers, giving the plant a billowing form. The evergreen leaves are a glossy dark green in color but many cultivars have bright red new foliage. New foliage on *Pieris japonica* ‘Valley Valentine’ is a bronze green that matures to a dark green before the end of spring. The reason most people purchase *Pieris japonica* ‘Valley Valentine’ is the beautiful dark pink flowers that cascade in a waterfall of color over the total plant in early spring. The flowers themselves look very similar to lily-of-the-valley without the wonderful fragrance. *Pieris* can be planted in a woodland setting as a part of a natural border or as a foundation plant. Good soil drainage is important since pieris is susceptible to *Phytophthora* root rot. If plants receive too much sun, it can be susceptible to lace bug and mites.
### Degree Days (As of April 10)

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### Upcoming Conferences

**Maryland Arborist Association Pest Walk**
May 28, 2014 (afternoon to early evening)
Location: Stevenson University

**Procrastinators’ Pesticide Applicators Program**
June 6, 2014
Location: Montgomery County Extension Office, Derwood

**Procrastinators’ Pesticide Applicators Program - Eastern Shore**
June 13, 2014
Location: Wye Research and Education Center, Queenstown, MD

**MGGA Field Day**
June 19, 2014 (afternoon through early evening)
Location: Tidal Creek Growers, Davidsonville, MD

**MNLA Field Day**
June 26, 2014
Location: Roseland Nurseries, Sudlersville, MD

**Maryland Christmas Tree Association Summer Meeting**
June 28, 2014
Location: Gaver Tree Farm, 5501 Detrick Road, Mt. Airy, MD 21771
Contact: 301-865-3515 or gavertreefarm@aol.com

**Greenhouse Biocontrol Conference**
August 6, 2014
Location: Maritime Institute, Linthicum, MD

**Stormwater Management Program**
August 20 and 21, 2014
**TWO Locations:** August 20 - Montgomery County Extension Office, Derwood, MD. August 21 - Robinson Nature Center, Columbia, MD

### PLANT

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<tr>
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<td>Forsythia</td>
<td>Columbia (April 7)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lindera benzoin (spicebush)</td>
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Thank you to the Maryland Arborist Association, the Landscape Contractors Association of MD, D.C. and VA, the Maryland Nursery and Landscape Association, Professional Grounds Management Society, and FALCAN for your financial support in making these weekly reports possible.

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