

# Final Project Report to the NYS IPM Program, Agricultural IPM 2002 – 2003

**Title:** *BRANCHING OUT - An Integrated Pest Management  
Newsletter for Trees and Shrubs*

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**Type of grant:** Public Education

**Project location(s):** Ithaca

## **Abstract:**

Eleven issues of Volume 9 of *Branching Out - An Integrated Pest Management Newsletter for Trees and Shrubs* were published in 2002. The newsletter was sent to 584 subscribers and an additional 39 cooperators. Readers received timely information for identifying and managing a wide array of insect and disease problems on trees and shrubs. With more counties throughout the state adopting the New York State Neighbor Notification Law, timely information about pests and pest management options has become essential for the industry, and *Branching Out* is one of the few sources of such information.

## **Background and justification:**

During the growing season, tree health managers are in constant need of up-to-date information on the occurrence and distribution of potentially damaging insect and disease pests. They also need to know what management options are open to them in the event that intervention is needed. Inasmuch as the need for this information comes at a time when most managers are working 14-16 hour days just to accommodate the needs of their clients, they would most benefit from an instrument that speaks directly to their concerns without the distraction of advertisements and other extraneous information.

In 1994, we sought to improve communication with the tree care industry through publication of a bi-weekly newsletter, *Branching Out*. Publication has continued every year since then with the number of subscribers ranging from 500 - 700 in any given year.

Subscribers who have access to personal computers and the Internet can also receive *Branching Out* via electronic pathways simply by requesting the proper access code from our staff. The electronic version has many more illustrations and numerous links to other internet sites where more information on pests, pathogens, and pest management strategies can be found.

## **Objectives:**

*Branching Out* is intended to enable tree care professionals to reduce pesticide use and maximize efficacy of applications that are made by:

1. Improving pest identification and appraisal via feature articles with color and B/W photos, line drawings, and verbal descriptions,
2. Maximizing timing for scouting and management activities via reporting of our own scouting report,
3. Offering a forum for public dialogue between scientists and pest managers via question and answer sections and regional reports by CCE educators and IPM specialists,
4. Providing a formal, annual published record of insect and disease occurrence in New York State.

### **Procedures:**

Objectives 1-4. Each issue of *Branching Out* is comprised of at least five sections which taken together are intended to achieve the objectives stated above. A Scouting Report, Growing Degree Day and Phenology records, a Feature Article in which issues related to identification and/or management concepts are presented, two Regional Reports, and a Miscellany section for presentation of important issues not covered in previous sections seem to meet the needs of the audience. Occasionally, questions submitted by readers or generated by our staff to reflect issues raised in personal visits or phone calls are also answered

The Scouting Report and Phenological Records are generated during bi-weekly scouting trips to most important horticultural areas in the state and after consultation with CCE staff. Growing degree days are from published data and from measurements taken at county sites. Feature Articles are prepared in advance from contemporary literature and staff experience. Regional Reports are written by county-based CCE staff and may reflect existing situations or be of a philosophical nature. Information for Miscellany comes from many different sources. *Branching Out* also serves as a vehicle for dissemination of 2(ee) labels for several important pests. Subscribers receive the appended labels immediately within - at most - two weeks of publication, and they could proceed to implement the expanded uses soon thereafter. Line drawings and photographs have been used to great effectiveness to supplement text and more are planned. *Branching Out* is also posted on the World Wide Web with access limited to paid subscribers.

### **Results and discussion:**

*Branching Out* was published bi-weekly from mid-April through mid-July and tri-weekly from July through September for a total of 11 issues in the 2002 season.

Each issue contained a scouting report - comprised of results of our own scouting in sites from Farmingdale, Long Island to Rochester together with reports from county Cooperative Extension agents, Cornell's Insect and Plant Disease Diagnostic Lab, and knowledgeable tree care professionals throughout the state. We also reported growing degree days and phenological observations and chose one pest or group of pests for the subject of an in-depth feature article. We also invited submission of regional reports prepared by Cornell Cooperative Extension educators and members of the IPM program staff and published 16 such reports during the season. Occasionally, an item that we thought was especially important for our readers to know about was published under our "Miscellany" category.

In 2002, *Branching Out* subscribers were especially well-prepared to deal with conventional insect and disease pests of landscape plants as well as some unexpected problems. For instance, in the spring of 2002, we saw an unprecedented occurrence of Rhabdodcline needlecast on Douglas-fir trees in Christmas tree plantations as well as landscapes in southeastern NY. While the disease is well known to Christmas tree growers, it is not so familiar to managers of landscape trees, and *Branching Out* was the perfect vehicle for conveying information to the landscape audience. Similarly, for some still unknown reason, there was an extraordinary

amount of dieback on Japanese maple trees in 2002. We never did arrive at a conclusive diagnosis for the problem but we were able to dispell the notion that Verticillium wilt was part of the problem. That piece of information, alone, prevented well-meaning managers from making needless fungicide applications. In yet another unusual case, Viburnum leaf beetle larva continued to feed for almost two weeks after their usual pupation time in late May, and plant health care professionals had a wider than normal window to knock down those populations. Finally, *Branching Out* readers knew within days of the discovery, that the hemlock woolly adelgid had been found in Monroe County. Quick publication of this important find put hundreds of trained professionals on alert to eradicate this introduced pest before it becomes established.

In our feature articles, we highlighted the following additional topics:

- Arthropod Pests That mimic Disease Problems
- As the Drought Continues....
- Conifer Weevils
- Drought and Barkbeetles
- Elms - Disease Resistance Beyond Dutch Elm Disease
- Germs and Worms: Biocontrol of Insect Pests?
- Hemlock Pests: Beyond the Woolly Adelgid
- Lesser Known Rusts of Broadleaf Trees and Shrubs
- Pheromone Traps
- Root Diseases of Conifers
- Whatever Happened To Introduced Pests of Recent Years?

**Volume 10 will be published in 2003.**