

# Soapberry Borer, *Agrilus prionurus* (Coleoptera: Buprestidae) An Exotic Pest Recently Detected in Texas

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A new insect pest of western soapberry (*Sapindus drummondii*) has recently been detected in several counties in Texas. The soapberry borer (*Agrilus prionurus*), a native of Mexico, was first reported in Bastrop County, TX in 2003. Since then, it has been detected in seven additional counties, including near or within the cities of Dallas, Austin, Houston and Corpus Christi.

As its populations expand rapidly in Texas, this buprestid is killing soapberry trees of all ages. It may eventually threaten western soapberry populations throughout the tree's range, which extends from northern Mexico to Missouri, and west to Arizona.

Western soapberry, typically an understory tree, is valued as an ornamental because it is drought hardy and relatively pest free (until now). Infestations of the soapberry borer are similar to those of emerald ash borer, *Agrilus planipennis*, a close relative.

Infested trees can be easily recognized by the exposed sapwood that results when birds and squirrels chip off the bark to feed on the larvae. A heavily-infested tree will be completely girdled by larval feeding in the cambium layer beneath the bark.

The adult beetle is about ½ inch-long, shining black and distinctively marked with four small white spots. It is narrowly cylindrical with tapering wing covers that merge to a point. Larvae are flat-headed wood borers that may attain an inch or more in length as they mature. After feeding beneath the bark, the larvae bore into the wood to complete development and to pupate. The adult leaves a D-shaped exit hole as it emerges.

Western soapberry appears to be this insect's sole host in Texas and the tree exhibits little resistance to this introduced pest. Little else is known about the insect's biology or methods of control. For more information or to report new infestations, contact the authors: [rbillings@tfs.tamu.edu](mailto:rbillings@tfs.tamu.edu) or [jpase@tfs.tamu.edu](mailto:jpase@tfs.tamu.edu).



Characteristic symptoms of *A. prionurus* infestations



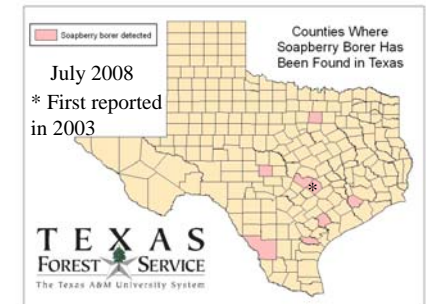
Larvae



D-shaped exit hole



Adults of *A. prionurus*



Desirable landscape soapberry tree killed near Houston



Western Soapberry