

Arborvitae Leafminer

TREE DOCTOR TIPS

Arborvitae Leafminer (*Argyresthia thuiella* and other species)

DESCRIPTION:

Arborvitae or cedar leafminers are larvae of small, silver and tan moths. The larvae are small, brownish-black caterpillars that burrow into the leaves of plants. Moths emerge in late spring or early summer and deposit eggs on the leaves. The larvae then feed on the leaves through the fall and winter seasons into early spring.

HOSTS:

This insect attacks cedar and arborvitae shrubs.

BIOLOGY AND SYMPTOMS:

The leafminer larvae tunnel inside the leaf tissues of the plant, causing them to turn brown and defoliate prematurely. Damage in the spring is easier to spot due to the appearance of untimely browning or dryness. Damage is generally more common on the lower and interior portions of the canopy. Larger trees and hedges typically lose their aesthetic value and their effectiveness as a screen, and cedars may become more susceptible to spider mites and gradually decline if not treated.

MANAGEMENT:

Damage can be minimized with insecticide applications in the spring and the fall. Mulching and watering cedars during dry seasons can be beneficial, as well as regular applications of slow-release fertilizers. Consult with your local arborist to learn the best methods for handling leafminers on your property.



A



B

FIGURE A. ARBORVITAE LEAFMINER LARVAE ON ARBORVITAE BRANCH

FIGURE B. DAMAGE CAUSED TO ARBORVITAE PLANT BY ARBORVITAE LEAFMINER (Photo credit: Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, ©Queen's Printer for Ontario, January 8, 2019)

*The scientists at **The Davey Institute** laboratory and research facility support our arborists and technicians in diagnosing and prescribing based on the latest arboricultural science. For specific treatment and application details, your arborist may consult *The Davey Institute PHC Handbook*.*

