Pest Alert: Redbay Ambrosia Beetle

Lateral view of the RAB.

Background:

Native to Asia, the Redbay Ambrosia Beetle (RAB) was first spotted in 2002 near Port Wentworth, Georgia. Since then, RAB has expanded into Florida and South Carolina. It is suspected RAB was introduced into the United States through wood packing materials, such as crates and pallets.

The RAB introduces a vascular fungus (*Raffaelea lauricola*) into its host, causing it to wilt and die. The insect and disease complex is known as "laurel wilt." In addition to laurel, this disease also affects avocado trees.

California is the leading producer of domestic avocados; therefore, introduction of RAB could be particularly devastating to our state. Approximately 60,000 acres spanning from San Luis Obispo through San Diego (home of 90 percent of nation's avocado crop) are in danger.

"Strings" of wood (right) and stained galleries (bottom) are signs of an infestation of RAB.

Redbay Ambrosia Beetle

Scientific: Xyleborus glabratus

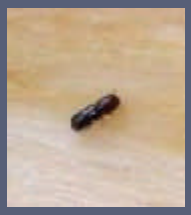
Order: Coleoptera

Family: Curculionidae

Damage:

Symptoms of a RAB attack may not be readily apparent on host. RABs create small strings of compacted sawdust that protrude out of the bark as they bore into the host. A closer look under the bark will often reveal galleries with a dark stain extending into the surrounding xylem. The stain is the host's response to being infected with the fungus.

Eventually, the host will exhibit wilted foliage with a reddish or purplish discoloration at the crown. Death of the host can occur between four to eleven weeks after inoculation.



Due to their size, RAB may be difficult to spot.

Host Range:

The host range of the laurel wilt disease carried by the RAB includes avocado, redbay, swampbay, sassafras, pondspice, pondberry and camphor.

Confirmed hosts of RAB includes redbay and sassafras. Laboratory experiments have shown that RAB can successfully infect avocado trees with the laurel wilt disease.

Reddish or purplish discoloration at the tree's crown is a classic symptom laurel wilt.

Identification:

Larvae — white, c -shaped, legless grubs with an amber-colored head capsule

Adult — small, elongated, cylindrical about 2 mm in length with a hairless and shiny dorsal surface.

Distribution:

It is suspected that RAB was introduced into the country on wood packing material, such as crates and pallets.

Expansion of the pest can occur through the RAB's natural reproduction and migration and through the sale and transport of infested wood for firewood or outdoor grilling.

Sources:
Freshfromflorida.com
Invasive.org