

New Pest Associated with Afghan Pine (*Pinus eldarica*) Found in the El Paso Area

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In the spring of 2008, Texas Forest Service urban forester Oscar Mestas found dying *Pinus eldarica* (Afghan pine) in El Paso, TX. Subsequent surveys found dying Afghan pines in several communities in west Texas and southern New Mexico. Further investigation revealed insect larvae associated with small pits under the bark of dying trees. The insect is believed to be a tiny chalcid wasp, probably *Eurytoma* species, family Eurytomidae.

What we know:

- ☑ At this time only found on *Pinus eldarica* (Afghan pine).
- ☑ Larvae construct pits in the xylem.
- ☑ Apparently a chalcid wasp; family Eurytomidae.
- ☑ Trees have been infested in past years as indicated by old pits covered with new wood.
- ☑ Infests trees of all ages.
- ☑ On older trees most infestations are on branches and twigs in the upper crown.
- ☑ On younger trees larvae are usually found on smooth bark on the main trunk in the top 1/3 of the crown.
- ☑ Multiple wasp attacks kill smaller twigs and branches, stressing the tree. Infested pines can survive low density attacks but severely-infested trees may eventually die.
- ☑ Environmental factors could be influencing the chalcid attacks.

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Dying Afghan pine in the El Paso area



Pits in the xylem made by chalcid larvae



Chalcid wasp found in dying Afghan pine in the El Paso area