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Spittlebugs - Trees and Shrubs

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Spittlebugs on stem

Key Points

- **Spittlebugs are sucking insects that feed on various trees, shrubs, and herbaceous perennials.**
- The adults are froghoppers, 1/4-1/2 inch long, dull colored, broadly oval, with prominent eyes.
- **Most noticeable are the nymphs (immatures) which are covered with a white frothy material.** The nymphs are smaller than the adults, and usually a pale greenish-yellow.
- Both the **adults and nymphs suck plant sap** from the twigs and stems of host plants.
- Some species appear to have a toxin that destroys plant tissue, causing leaf stunting, distortion, and twig dieback.

- **To monitor for this insect look for the white spittle masses on the terminal twigs of host plants from April through June (in Maryland).**
- The adults are present from July through September.
- [Management](#)



Spittlebug nymph



Spittlebug mass

Pine Spittlebug



Pine spittlebug mass

- Frothy masses of spittle on the twigs of pine is noticeable in May and June.
- Nymphs or the immature spittlebugs are found beneath the spittle.
- They are black with whitish abdomens.
- Adults are about 1/4 inch long and tan with 2 irregular, whitish bands on each wing.
- They may be found feeding in the same location as the nymphs in July and August.
- The pine spittlebug sucks sap from the twigs.
- Scotch pine is its preferred host but it may also be found on pitch, Eastern white, Virginia, Jack, slash, loblolly, Japanese, and Mugo pines.

Management

- In light infestations, manually destroy nymphs in spittle.
- Heavy infestations in successive years may kill Scotch/Scots pine.
- When needed, spray the spittle masses with a contact insecticide when noticed.

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