



Currant Borer

Synanthedon tipuliformis

The currant borer is a destructive insect pest that has been known to become so abundant in some gardens that the raising of currants may be abandoned for a time. In addition to currant, it may attack gooseberry, black elder and sumac.

Injury. The caterpillar causes the injury by feeding on the pith of the stem. Infested canes do not die in the fall, but put out a sickly growth the following spring. Larval feeding prevents the movement of adequate amounts of water and nutrients, and the canes eventually die.

Description. The currant borer adult is a clearwing moth that usually appears in June and may be found flying around the host plants or resting on the leaves. The wingspan is about $\frac{3}{4}$ " (18mm) and the female has a purplish-black body with three narrow bands of yellow across the abdomen. The transparent wings of both have a golden-purple border and a band of the same color on the forewings.

The larva, which is the damaging stage, is whitish with a brown head and legs. It is found in the pith of the stems of the currant plant.

Life History. In June, the females deposit brown globular eggs singly on the bark of younger stems of the host plants. Upon hatching, the tiny larvae bore into the stem and burrow through the center. By the end of the summer, the $\frac{1}{2}$ " (13mm) larva is nearly full-grown, and it is this nearly mature caterpillar that overwinters.

The following May, the larva burrows toward the surface of the stem, forming a silk-lined hole just below a thin layer of bark and pupates there. When the adult is ready to hatch, the pupal case is pushed part way out of the stem and the adult moth emerges leaving the empty pupal skin projecting from the hole. There is only one generation per year.

Management. Because nearly all the feeding is done within the stem, this borer cannot be reached with contact sprays. Cultural control can be achieved by cutting out and burning or otherwise destroying infested canes before June 1 each year. It is easy to distinguish infested canes just after the leaves appear in the spring because of their weak, sickly appearance. Cut canes as close to the ground as possible and crush the canes to kill any larvae or pupae that may be inside. Canes should be destroyed or borers might still emerge.

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*Adult currant borer -
A clearwing moth*