

Western Spruce Budworm, *Choristoneura occidentalis* Freeman, is the most destructive and widely distributed forest defoliator in the west. Douglas and white fir are the most commonly infested, although Englemann and blue spruce as well as subalpine fir can also become infested.



Adults are small mottled generally rusty-brown moths whose color can vary from tan to almost black. They are present from late July to early August. Females lay green eggs on needle undersides which hatch in about 10 days. Young larvae spin silken shelters under bark scales remaining dormant through winter.

In late April/early May the larvae migrate to foliage where they mine old needles and in a couple of weeks then enter new needles. The larvae continue to feed doing the greatest damage at this stage. Around the end of June the larvae pupate with adults emerging a week or so later beginning the cycle all over again. During long outbreaks of 3-5 or more years approximately one in four trees die.



Defoliation affects the aesthetic value of the infested trees. Promotion of tree vigor, as with all pests, is important to protect high value trees. Spraying should occur during the 2-3 weeks following flush of new growth.

