Beech Bark Disease: An Imminent Threat

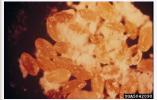Beech bark disease is a devastating disease that affects native American Beech trees (*Fagus grandifolia*) as well as exotic, ornamental beech. It is caused by a sap feeding insect and a fungal pathogen. The insect, a small, white, fuzzy scale known as beech scale feeds on beech sap. These tiny insects can be transported on wind currents and on firewood but do not fly.

Beech scale insects

Once the young insects land on a beech tree, they attach to the bark through their feeding mouthparts and do not move again. Heavy infestations may make the tree appear to have been rolled in powdered sugar (see photo at right).

The multitude of wounds created from the insect feeding create an entry point for a lethal fungus called *Neonectria faginata*. The fungus arrives after the initial insect introduction and creates lesions called cankers under the bark. These lesions can slowly kill the tree after several years, fewer if a tree is already stressed.

Beech bark cankers

Beech bark disease is in Virginia it but has not yet been found in Fairfax County.

What YOU can do to help:

☑ Please do NOT transport hardwood firewood of any kind. **Burn it where you buy it.**

☑ If beech scale is found on a tree, remove the insects with a mixture of dish detergent and water and a soft brush. Consult with a certified arborist for further treatment.

☑ Check rough patches on the bark of beech trees. The scale insect will seek refuge in these sheltered locations.

☑ Please prune trees properly; do not leave large, exposed wounds.

☑ Going hiking? Take a look in the woods for the "powdered sugar effect."

A beech tree covered in beech scale

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