

# Review of 2005 & 2006 Predictions

by Paul Markworth, Master Arborist WI-0153B



Reviewing the past is always easy. It's predicting the future that is hard. That being said, we will boldly go ahead.

**Gypsy moth** populations were way down in '05 compared to previous years and even though we've seen spotty concentrations of egg masses, we don't expect much activity this coming year.

The big problem of '05 was the extended **drought**.

This stressed most trees and this stress reduced their resistance to other problems. We were already seeing an increase in **two-lined chestnut borers** in drought stressed oaks. Our expectations are that the two-lined chestnut borer problem will even be worse in '06. Even if the drought were to end, we expect to see a buildup of **bronze birch borers, shothole borers, ash borers** and many others. If the drought doesn't end, the buildup could be epidemic.

The increase we saw in **root rots** in '05 is also largely drought-related. The extremely dry soils caused the weakening and/or death of root systems. When we had short periods of saturated soils, the various root rot fungi were very active in attacking the damaged root systems. Root rot fungi not only weaken and stress a tree, but they can also compromise the tree's stability. Moist spring soils can be ideal for the root rot fungi's development.

**Spider mites** were showing up on all sorts of plants late last summer. The spruce spider mite, in particular, was present in high concentrations on spruce and arborvitae during our dry September. The desiccated needles won't start showing up until spring, though. Hopefully, we will have adequate spring rains, which will help reduce the attacks and lessen the damage.

**Oak wilt** was on the rise in Walworth and western Waukesha Counties last year. We expect that to continue to be a major problem, particularly with red and black oaks. This is not a problem that, if "left alone," will go away. It needs to be addressed as soon as it appears in order to save nearby oaks.

Last year saw "gazillions" of **boxelder bugs**. As they only feed on the seeds and new shoots of silver maple and boxelder, they do not do much damage. But their affinity for and ability to get into our houses make them a severe nuisance pest. They are another insect that has benefited from the drought. If the silver maple seed crop is down this year, the boxelder bugs should be, too.

It takes great knowledge, thought and experience to properly diagnose and treat complicated tree health problems. Borers, for example, tend to be a secondary problem that requires a two- or three-pronged treatment program. At Wachtel, we are the Professional Arborists who perform Professional Arboriculture.