

Strange Growth on Trees and Shrubs

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Have you ever noticed strange growths on the leaves, twigs, or trunks of trees? How about on goldenrod? These growths are known collectively as galls. Some galls are very easily noticed while others are hardly noticed at all. The insect or mite that forms a gall is called a gallmaker. These tiny mites or insects either feed on the plant where the gall is found or lay eggs on the plant or within plant tissue. Protecting the gallmaker from adverse weather, predators, and parasites the gall also provides the insect or mites with a good source of carbohydrates and protein.

Galls are formed in a plant host in response to plant-growth-regulators or other stimuli by the gallmaker. Galls only grow where cell growth is actively taking place and formation of galls stops when the leaves or stem stops growing. The good news for the tree or shrub is that galls seldom cause serious damage with the exception of making the tree or shrub unsightly. Often galls are blamed on the death of a tree but more often than not the galls did not contribute to the decline of the plant but came in after the damage was done.

Most tree and shrub species have gallmakers that cause many different galls. The following table list several tree species, galls, and gallmakers that you might find in your landscape.

Host	Gall	Gallmaker	Host	Gall	Gallmaker
Ash	Ash flower gall	Mite	Maple	Gouty vein gall	Midge
Cottonwood	Leaf-petiole gall	Aphid	Oak	Succulent oak gall	Wasp
	Poplar petiole gall	Aphid		Noxious oak gall	Wasp
Hackberry	Hackberry nipple gall	Psyllid		Jumping bullet gall	Wasp
	Hackberry flask gall	Psyllid		Marginal fold gall	Midge
	Spiny hackberry gall	Midge		Oak apples	Wasp
	Witches'-broom	Mite		Oak pill gall	Midge
Honey-locust	Honey-locust pod gall	Midge		Oak leaf galls	Wasp
Linden	Linden wart gall	Midge		Oak bullet gall	Wasp
	Linden twig gall	Midge		Spruce	Eastern spruce gall
Maple	Maple bladder gall	Mite			Cooley spruce gall
	Maple erineum gall	Mite	Willow	Willow cone gall	Midge
	Maple spindle gall	Mite		Willow blister gall	Mite

If you find galls in the landscape you can spray with a variety of insecticides or miticides, however, the timing of the spray is very precise and it is not recommended as the gallmakers do not damage the tree or shrub permanently. So, just sit back and enjoy the galls you find as they can be very interesting in the landscape.

If you have questions or comments about this article please contact me at 605-394-2188 or via email at ricky.abrahamson@sdstate.edu.