



## Gloomy scale

*Melanaspis tenebricosa*

Order Hemiptera, Family Diaspididae; armored scales  
Native pest

**Host plants:** Red and silver maples are preferred, but boxelder, catalpa, elm, hackberry, mulberry, and sycamore are also susceptible.

**Description:** Adult female covers are convex, circular, approximately 3 mm in diameter, and dark gray, with black shed skins attached centrally. Male covers are smaller and oval.

**Life history:** Eggs are deposited in late June to early July. Crawlers appear at about the same time, with adults in mid August. This scale is only found on bark, branches or twigs of hosts. There is one generation a year.

**Overwintering:** Mated females.

**Damage symptoms:** Serious infestations of the gloomy scale can cause stunting and dieback of affected limbs.

**Monitoring:** Look for scales from about mid August. Flip covers with your thumbnail to ensure that live females are present. Beginning in late June to early July, look for crawlers and settled nymphs on bark. Also check for the presence of beneficials.

**Chemical control:** *General information.*

*Conservation of beneficial insects:* Use short duration, low residual insecticides, such as horticultural oil, insecticidal soap, and insect growth regulators (IGR).

*Foliar applied broad spectrum insecticides, such as acephate, carbaryl, and pyrethroids:* Use only when scale populations are high to rescue trees; beneficial insects will also be killed.

*Dormant season oil treatments:* Use for armored scales that overwinter as eggs under female covers (delayed dormant).

*Summer oil treatments:* Oil smothers exposed eggs, crawlers, and immature females.

*Insect growth regulators (IGR), such as pyriproxifen:* Use for crawlers as they disrupt molting.

*Soil applied systemic insecticides or trunk injections, such as imidacloprid:* Not effective against armored scales, which feed at different sites than soft scales.

**Biological control:** Common armored scale predators are lacewings, lady beetles, and predaceous midges. Parasitoids are also important.



Gloomy scale adult female on silver maple. (131)  
Photo: John Davidson



Gloomy scale adult female with the cover flipped off. (131)  
Photo: John Davidson

**Plant mortality risk:** Low

**Biorational pesticides:** horticultural oil, insecticidal soap, pyriproxifen

**Conventional pesticides:** acephate, bifenthrin, carbaryl, chlorpyrifos (nursery only), deltamethrin, fluvalinate, lambda-cyhalothrin, malathion, permethrin