Balsam twig aphid

*Mindarus abietinus*
Order Homoptera, Family Aphididae; aphids
Native pest

**Host plants:** All species of fir, balsam and Fraser, some spruce and pine species.

**Description:** Mature aphids are bluish gray and approximately 1.8 mm long. Later in the season mature aphids on new needles are covered with white wax.

**Life history:** There are three stages of aphids which appear during the year: brown-gray, wingless females, followed by blue-gray forms with a white waxy covering, and then by winged forms capable of migrating. There are several generations per year.

**Overwintering:** Eggs on bark.

**Damage symptoms:** Needles may become deformed or glued together by sticky honeydew, so that they subsequently yellow and fall prematurely. New spring growth may be stunted or deformed and the bark roughened.

**Monitoring:** As buds swell, look for wingless females on buds. Also look for white forms on new needles in June. Look for curled needles as a result of aphid feeding, and for copious amounts of honeydew.

**Cultural control:** Avoid planting trees too close.

**Chemical control:** Horticultural oil can be applied as a dormant spray if eggs are detected in large numbers. Applications of well-timed sprays may be used in spring if numerous overwintering aphids are present on new growth.

**Biological control:** Ants, yellow jackets, big-eyed bugs, damsel bugs, assassin bugs, minute pirate bugs, lacewings, earwigs, predatory thrips, lady beetles, ground beetles, soldier beetles, hover fly larvae, and predaceous midges are all important predators. *Aphidius* wasps (Braconidae) are important parasitoids.

**Plant mortality risk:** Low

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

**Conventional pesticides:** acephate, bifenthrin, carbaryl, chlorpyrifos (nursery only), deltamethrin, imidacoprid