

ELM LEAF BEETLE

The elm leaf beetle has become established in the suburbs of Adelaide and it has infested many trees across Mitcham. Elm leaf beetle causes cosmetic damage to elm trees when grubs feed on the leaves. Some leaves develop a 'shot-hole' or lacey appearance and others may be almost completely eaten. While the grubs put elm trees under stress the trees usually recover when new leaves grow in the spring.

Summer heat waves kill adult elm leaf beetles, with large numbers falling from trees on hot days, but reinfestation is common. Infested trees can be treated with a systemic insecticide which is usually applied during spring. An arborist can either inject the pesticide directly into the tree's sapwood or, if it is a young tree, apply a drench to the soil in the tree's root zone. Treatment should protect trees against elm leaf beetle for up to two years. During this time adult beetles will be seen in the trees but grubs feeding on the leaves will be killed by the residual pesticide.

Pesticides should only be applied as a 'last resort', with more environmentally friendly options being explored first. Improving tree health organically can reduce the stresses caused by elm leaf beetle. Consider reducing grass growth beneath trees, instead covering the soil with a 50 – 75 mm deep layer of mulch and compost. Irrigating the trees with a drip system or running some water from a roof downpipe into the tree's root zone will also greatly aid tree health and speed the recovery after browsing by elm leaf beetle grubs.

If you would like advice on how to treat a tree on your property you are able to consult a local arborist; contact details can be found in the Yellow Pages and some contractors also advertise in the Messenger Press. If you have concerns regarding an elm tree on land owned by Council please telephone 8372 8888 and lodge a customer request for a tree inspection and assessment.



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