

Pest du Jour: Oak Gall Midge

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A unique gall-making insect has been sighted in Oklahoma landscapes this spring - an oak gall midge likely belonging to the genus, *Contarinia*. Last spring, these insects were reported occurring on live oaks in Texas on the website, Insects in the City (Texas Agri-Life Extension, 2011). The report mentioned that tiny, white maggots were seen dropping to the ground, which is typical behavior for larvae of several economically important *Contarinia* species (Gagné and Beavers, 1984; Hara and Niino-Duponte, 2002). In Oklahoma, reports of oak gall midge have been

received from Eufaula and Tulsa. We received a bagged sample collected from shumard oak in Eufaula and found an abundance of larvae crawling inside the Ziploc bag!

There isn't much information about the oak gall midge because it isn't common and hasn't been described scientifically (i.e., no species name has been assigned to this creature). Also, unlike some close relatives like the sorghum midge and blossom midge, oak gall midges do not appear to cause significant harm to their hosts nor does galling activity result in economic loss. The galls may be unsightly, but affected trees will not suffer and die from an infestation of oak gall midge. While not much is known about the life cycle of oak gall midge, larvae likely feed on sap from the developing oak flowers (Texas Agri-Life Extension, 2011). This feeding behavior causes gall formation. Adult flies emerge from the soil and lay their eggs on flower buds before catkins open. Upon hatching, larvae feed and develop rapidly and reach their full size of 1.5 mm prior to dropping to the ground. Once on the ground, larvae remain in a restful state (called diapause) until pupating the following spring. The circle of life then continues with adults emerging from their pupae and laying eggs on the host tree (Texas Agri-Life Extension, 2011).



While some folks may find the galls ugly, there is no need to treat affected oak trees. In fact, gall-making insects are difficult to