

BAY AREA

An invasive beetle that attacks trees has been spotted in the Bay Area. Here's how to identify it

By [Elizabeth Wilson](#), Staff writer Aug 25, 2024



A female shothole borer, shown in a magnified view, is about the size of a sesame seed. Males are smaller. John Kabashima/UC Cooperative Extension

An invasive beetle, known to attack more than 65 tree species in California and kill more than 17, was located in San Jose on Friday.

Researchers found the shothole borer, a tiny insect that tunnels into trees, according to a news release from Santa Clara County. After tunneling, shothole borers introduce a fungus that serves as food for its larvae, the release said. The fungus causes a disease in trees that prevents them from transporting water and nutrients, which damages and sometimes kills the trees.

The nonnative pest can kill the box elder, California sycamore, valley oak, Japanese maple and American sweet gum trees, among others. In the 2000s, the species was discovered in Southern California, where it killed tens of thousands of trees in seven counties.

Researchers don't know how widespread the infestation is, though they said the beetle may have been in San Jose for years. It was also unclear how the beetle made it to the South Bay, which may have been due to the movement of infested green waste or firewood, the release said. Beetles can also travel through nursery stock and packing materials such as wood pallets or crates.

“We’re asking for the community’s help in identifying trees that have been attacked by invasive shothole borers, which will help us determine the extent of the infestation,” said Drew Raymond, acting agricultural commissioner for Santa Clara County. “While we probably can’t get rid of the invasive shothole borer at this point, we can contain the infestation to protect as many of our trees as possible.”



The entry and exit holes of invasive shothole borers are about the size of the tip of a ballpoint pen.
Monica Dimson/UC Cooperative Extension

An infested tree can be identified by an entry hole “that is perfectly round and roughly the size of the tip of a ballpoint pen,” the agency said. Additional signs include wet staining, gumming, insect waste, boring dust and sugary buildup around entry and exit holes.

Residents who see signs of infestation are advised to contact the Santa Clara County Department of Agriculture at scc.agriculture@cep.sccgov.org or 408-918-4610.