

Musings from the Extension Office
Stafford Cooperative Extension Office
May 28, 2019



When I first saw today's mystery photo, it looked to me like snow on a Crapemyrtle tree. What do you think may be going on?

Answer at end of email.

When I first began to study the identification of evergreen conifers, I had a very hard time getting to learn how to do it efficiently and correctly. Vicky Kealiher sent me this excellent article named **CONIFER CONFUSION: AN IDENTIFICATION GUIDE FOR PINE, SPRUCE, AND FIR TREES** which she found at a site named Garden Paths and which you will find very informative and helpful in improving your ID

skills. Go to <https://gardenerspath.com/plants/landscape-trees/identifying-conifers/>.

Along the same vein, early on in my journey to be able to identify trees in general, I wanted to see if I could become proficient in recognizing trees only by their bark. The only book I could find to help was **Bark: A Field Guide to Trees of the Northeast by Michael Wojtech**. In addition to devouring that book, I spent many hours looking at young/old barks throughout Virginia and beyond trying to improve my bark ID skills. Recently, I found a bark quiz at the blog **Plant Hunter**. It certainly isn't easy but see how well you can do. Go to <https://plantquest.blogspot.com/> (**The Beauty of Bark**).

Answer: Crapemyrtle bark scale (*Acanthococcus lagerstroemiae*)

Crapemyrtle bark scale has been confirmed in all the Southeastern U.S. except for Florida. In its native range in East Asia, CMBS is a serious threat to crapemyrtles, persimmons, and pomegranate plants. In the U.S., it is an emerging pest that threatens crapemyrtle production and landscape use. This is a matter of concern because crapemyrtle is the highest selling flowering tree—5 million plants with a combined value of \$67M were sold in 2014.

Currently, CMBS in the U.S. is only reported on crapemyrtles, but the spread of CMBS (confirmed by molecular identification) to native American beautyberry plants in Texarkana, TX and Shreveport, LA is alarming.

For an excellent article on CMBS, go to <https://agriflifeextension.tamu.edu/library/landscaping/alternative-hosts-of-crapemyrtle-bark-scale/> (Clemson Cooperative Extension). Another wonderful article from Clemson on Crapemyrtle diseases and insect pests can be found at <https://hgic.clemson.edu/factsheet/crape-myrtle-diseases-insect-pests/>.

David & Guy