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### Be Careful When Moving Infested Wood

by Mary Louise Flint\*, Master Gardener Program

When you trim or remove a tree on your property that is infested with insects or disease, what do you do with the wood? Should you leave it on site and use it for firewood? Should you move it to another location for others to use as firewood? If you move wood to another location, you may be unintentionally spreading insect pests or tree diseases.

Nonnative insects and diseases that can kill large numbers of trees can be transported long distances on firewood. Upon arrival to new areas, these insects and diseases can become established and kill trees.

Three important invasive pests that are already in some parts of California that can spread this way are: Goldspotted oak borer, Sudden Oak Death (SOD), and Pitch canker.

The Goldspotted oak borer insect (*Agrilus auroguttatus*) has been killing thousands of several native oak species in parks and forests of San Diego County east of El Cajon, and poses a threat to certain oak species throughout California. The larvae living within wood may remain viable in cut wood for at least a year. This pest arrived in San Diego in firewood.



The larva of Goldspotted oak borer live just beneath the bark of infested trees.

Sudden Oak Death (SOD caused by the fungus, *Phytophthora ramorum*) has been killing coast live oak, black oak, tanoak, and canyon live oak in coastal California from Monterey County northward and could spread southward and inland in the state.

Although not killed by SOD, many other shrubs and trees such as bay laurel, rhododendron, and camellia can also harbor the disease and may spread it when infested leaves or live plants are moved.



The Gypsy moth is a foliage feeder that hasn't established in California, but it could arrive as pupae on wood.

Pitch canker (caused by the fungus, *Fusarium circinatum*) has infected Monterey pines in most coastal California counties, but there are still many areas that aren't infested.

Many other pests not yet established in California threaten our landscape and forest trees. Some of the most serious likely to be brought here in or on wood include the Gypsy moth, Emerald ash borer, Asian longhorned beetle, and Redbay ambrosia beetle.

To prevent the spread of tree pests, chip or grind small branches and use them as mulch on site or locally. Larger

wood can be used locally for firewood, but never transport it more than about 25 to 50 miles. Where invasive pests are a known problem, then the wood should not be transported beyond the zone of infestation. So please do not bring firewood up to the valley from San Diego or over from the coast.

When storing cut wood for firewood on site you can kill many pests by tightly covering the wood with high quality UV-resistant clear plastic for a season. In addition to reducing the number of emerging Goldspotted Oak borers, this treatment will also kill other wood boring insects such as bark beetles that could emerge to attack nearby healthy trees.

Also, don't bring firewood from home on camping trips. Purchase firewood near the campground and leave any unused wood on site rather than taking it home. More tips can be found at the California Firewood Task Force Web site at <http://firewood.ca.gov/>

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Goldspotted oak borers,  
Female (left), Male right).

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