POPLAR VAGABOND APHID—*Mordvilkoja vagabunda*

HOSTS: Cottonwood and other poplars

IDENTIFICATION, LIFE CYCLE, AND DAMAGE: Nymphs and asexual adults range from 1 to 4 mm in length and have black heads, black thoraxes, and pale abdomens. Egg-laying females are golden-yellow.

Aphids overwinter as eggs that hatch in spring about the time new leaves expand. Young nymphs move to new shoots where they feed on sap. Initially infested leaves are reddish; later they become twisted and hollow. Two generations of aphids are produced within the galls. Winged adults leave the poplar galls during July and fly to secondary host plants where they feed and reproduce asexually for the rest of the summer. In fall winged adults migrate back to previously infested trees and deposit eggs in old galls or in bark crevices near the galls.

Galls persist on branches after leaves are shed. The same trees are often infested year after year while neighboring trees are not infested. Fully developed galls are 8 to 9.5 cm in diameter and initially are green. They dry out and turn dark brown after aphids emerge. Although galls are unsightly, they do not affect tree vigor.

CONTROL: Spray trees immediately after leaves start to expand with oxydemeton-methyl, or a similar systemic insecticide labeled for use on poplars and cottonwoods. Contact your extension agent for more specific recommendations.

Gall of poplar vagabond aphid