



Puente Hills Landfill
Native Habitat Preservation Authority

What's Lurking in your Firewood?

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With autumn just around the corner, you may be starting to think about buying firewood. But besides the usual critters that hang out with firewood, such as spiders or scorpions, there may be another, much more dangerous threat that is too small to see. That threat is from a small beetle, called the gold-spotted oak borer. As its name suggests, it bores into oak trees, and it eats away at their critical vascular tissue, eventually killing them. As of 2010, this beetle has killed an estimated 21,500 trees covering 1,893 square miles in San Diego County in forests, parks, and residential landscapes.

Fortunately, there are no known occurrences of the gold-spotted oak borer in Los Angeles or Orange Counties. Unfortunately, it is known to occur in not-too-distant San Diego County. If firewood from oak trees in San Diego County is transported elsewhere, it could spread the gold-spotted oak borer into new areas. When firewood is harvested, the beetle may be present in its larval stage, feeding off of the oak's tissue beneath the bark. When that oak that becomes firewood, the beetle is transported along with the firewood. By late spring, the beetle transforms into its adult stage, with wings, and it flies out of the wood to find new oak trees on which to lay eggs. These eggs hatch into larvae, which bore into the new oak tree, and the cycle begins again.

Currently, there is no known effective remedy or treatment for the gold-spotted oak borer. Sometimes infested oak trees must be killed before others are affected. Our native coast live oak trees not only help to define the beauty and naturalness of the hills in Hacienda Heights, but also provide food and shelter for numerous invertebrates, birds, and mammals. Their importance is reflected by the fact that they are considered a protected tree species by Los Angeles County, and oak woodlands are also protected by the State. Oaks also provide shade for homes, and can even add to property values. Oaks continue to be lost to land development and other impacts, and it is important to retain and protect the remnant patches that remain. Therefore, the best hope we have in protecting our oak trees from further loss due to the gold-spotted oak borer is to prevent it from getting here in the first place. Please, ***check on the source of your firewood before you buy it***, and avoid buying oak firewood from San Diego County. Help protect the beauty and natural value provided by our native coast live oaks.

For more information, visit these websites:

www.ucanr.org/sites/gsoinfo

www.cisr.ucr.edu/goldspotted_oak_borer.html

