



Understanding Insect Activity & GALLS ON TREES

At Forrest Keeling Nursery, we understand that noticing insect activity or minor leaf damage, such as galls, on your newly planted or established trees may raise questions. Rest assured, **this is often a natural and healthy part of your tree's integration into its environment.** In this article, we'll explain why insect activity is a positive sign, address concerns about galls, and share insights from recent research and experts like Dr. Doug Tallamy to help you embrace your tree's role in supporting local ecosystems.

TREES AS VIBRANT ECOSYSTEMS

A single tree is a thriving hub of life, hosting a complex ecosystem of microbes and insects. According to a recent *New York Times* article (August 27, 2025), a tree can support a trillion microbial cells, forming an invisible network that boosts its health and resilience. Insects are a key part of this ecosystem. Dr. Doug Tallamy, a leading entomologist, emphasizes that native insects are essential for healthy ecosystems, serving as a primary food source for birds and other wildlife. **Minor leaf damage—such as small holes, chewed edges, or galls—is a sign that your tree is actively contributing to local biodiversity.**

WHAT ARE GALLS?

Galls are growths on leaves, stems, or branches caused by insects like mites, wasps, or flies, which trigger the tree to form these structures. They may appear as small bumps, balls, or irregular growths. While galls might look unusual, they are **typically harmless and do not impact the tree's overall health or growth.** Galls are a natural part of a tree's interaction with its environment, often tied to specific native insect species that play a role in maintaining ecological balance.

IS INSECT DAMAGE A CAUSE FOR CONCERN?

In most cases, insect activity, including galls, **poses no threat to your tree's long-term health.** Trees have evolved to coexist with native insects, and minor leaf damage or galls generally does not hinder their ability to photosynthesize, grow, or thrive. At Forrest Keeling Nursery, we use our proprietary **Root Production Method (RPM) technology** to grow trees with robust, fibrous root systems, ensuring exceptional vigor and survivability. Every tree is thoroughly inspected before delivery to confirm its health and readiness for planting. Additionally, our nursery is certified by the Systems Approach to Nursery Certification (SANC) program, reflecting our commitment to **best management practices for pest management and pest health.**

discover the
RPM DIFFERENCE

SHOULD YOU TREAT INSECT DAMAGE OR GALLS?

In the vast majority of cases, **no treatment is needed for galls or minor insect damage.** Chemical interventions can disrupt the beneficial microbial and insect communities that support your tree and its surrounding ecosystem. Dr. Tallamy's research highlights that fostering native insect populations promotes ecological balance, benefiting your landscape over time. If you observe severe defoliation or suspect a pest issue beyond typical galls, contact our team for guidance.

YOUR TREE'S ROLE IN THE ECOSYSTEM

Your tree is more than just a plant—it's a dynamic contributor to nature. **The presence of insects, including those causing galls, indicates that your tree is supporting pollinators, birds, and other wildlife, helping to create a thriving ecosystem.** By planting native trees from Forrest Keeling Nursery, grown with RPM technology for superior resilience, you're playing a vital role in restoring biodiversity and fostering a healthier environment. As the *New York Times* article notes, the intricate relationships between trees, microbes, and insects are critical to ecological vitality and are only beginning to be fully understood.

WE'RE HERE TO HELP

If you have questions about your trees, including concerns about galls or insect activity, or need advice on their care, our team at Forrest Keeling Nursery is here to support you. **Contact us for expert guidance to ensure your trees flourish.**

