

Willow

(*Salix* spp. — includes Weeping Willow, Golden Willow, Globe Willow, Niobe Willow, and native riparian willows)








Willows grow rapidly and prefer **moist soils**, making them common along waterways and irrigated landscapes in Colorado. They are beautiful but prone to **borers**, **cankers**, **aphids**, **scale**, **leaf spots**, and **structural breakage**, especially in windy or dry sites.



Seasonal Pest & Disease Calendar

Icons: 🌸 Spring | ☀️ Summer | 🍂 Fall | ❄️ Winter

<u>Problem</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Active Season</u>	<u>Icons</u>
Willow leaf beetle	Insect	Spring–Summer	🌸☀️
Aphids	Insect	Spring–Fall	🌸☀️🍂
Scale insects	Insect	Spring crawlers; visible year-round	🌸❄️
Borers (poplar/willow borers)	Insect/borer	Summer	☀️

<u>Problem</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Active Season</u>	<u>Icons</u>
Cytospora canker / other cankers	Fungus	Spring–Fall	  
Rust & leaf spot diseases	Fungus	Spring–Summer	 
Environmental stress (drought/wind breakage)	Abiotic	Summer–Fall	 

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## Pest & Disease Guide (Homeowner-Friendly)

<u>Problem</u>	<u>Common Symptoms</u>	<u>Treatment &amp; Management</u>
Willow Leaf Beetle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skeletonized leaves</li> <li>• Defoliation in patches</li> <li>• Small black/green beetles and larvae</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Often cosmetic</li> <li>• Hose-rinse foliage</li> <li>• In severe cases, pro-applied insecticide</li> </ul>
Aphids	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sticky honeydew</li> <li>• Sooty mold</li> <li>• Leaf curling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water spray to remove aphids</li> <li>• Natural predators (lady beetles)</li> <li>• Systemic insecticides for major infestations</li> </ul>
Scale Insects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hard bumps or cottony masses on twigs</li> <li>• Yellowing leaves</li> <li>• Dieback in severe cases</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Treat crawler stage in late spring</li> <li>• Horticultural oil late winter</li> <li>• Prune badly infested branches</li> </ul>
Borers (Willow/Poplar Borers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oval or round exit holes</li> <li>• Frass at trunk or branch unions</li> <li>• Dieback from branch tips</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce stress—borers attack weakened trees</li> <li>• Deep watering, mulch</li> <li>• Professional preventive sprays in active years</li> </ul>

<u>Problem</u>	<u>Common Symptoms</u>	<u>Treatment &amp; Management</u>
<b>Cytospora &amp; Other Cankers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sunken, cracked, or discolored bark</li> <li>• Oozing sap</li> <li>• Branch dieback</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prune infected limbs back to collar</li> <li>• Sanitize tools</li> <li>• Improve vigor—no chemical cure</li> </ul>
<b>Rust &amp; Leaf Spot Diseases</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Orange, brown, or black leaf spots</li> <li>• Premature leaf drop</li> <li>• Worse in wet, humid seasons</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rake &amp; remove leaves</li> <li>• Improve airflow</li> <li>• Fungicide rarely required</li> </ul>
<b>Environmental Stress (Drought/Wind Breakage)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leaf scorch</li> <li>• Cracked or broken limbs</li> <li>• Sparse canopy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deep water every 1–2 weeks in summer</li> <li>• Proper structural pruning</li> <li>• Avoid planting in dry, windy exposed sites</li> </ul>

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### When to Worry vs. When It's Cosmetic

#### ● When to Worry (action recommended)

- Large branches cracking or breaking (willows have brittle wood)
- Significant borer activity (multiple exit holes, dieback)
- Expanding cankers on trunk or major limbs
- Heavy scale with sticky honeydew and sooty mold
- Repeated defoliation causing thinning canopy
- Severe scorch during heat waves despite watering

These situations call for **professional evaluation**, especially due to willows' fast growth and weak wood structure.

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#### ● Mostly Cosmetic (monitor only)

- Light leaf beetle feeding

- Mild aphid activity early in season
- Small leaf spots or rust patches
- Occasional tip dieback
- Early fall color during drought

These typically resolve with **watering, pruning, and seasonal weather changes.**