

PINE DWARF MISTLETOE

Recognize infection and manage it over time.

Dwarf mistletoes are native parasitic plants that draw water and nutrients from conifers. In Colorado they commonly affect ponderosa and lodgepole pine, spread slowly from nearby infected trees, and can reduce growth, deform crowns, and increase mortality over time.



Diagnosis begins with the host species and the pattern of shoots, swellings, branch distortion, and witches' brooms.

● CONFIRM THE DIAGNOSIS

HOST AND SIGNS

Not every broomed branch is mistletoe.

- ✓ Identify the tree species and inspect for small shoots on branches or stems.
- ✓ Look for localized swelling, distorted branching, witches' brooms, and crown decline.
- ✓ Have uncertain symptoms confirmed before removing valuable trees.

● READ THE INFECTION

LOCATION AND SEVERITY

Management depends on more than presence alone.

- ✓ Note infected branches, trunk infections, crown position, tree vigor, and nearby hosts.
- ✓ Map infected groups and uninfected regeneration to understand likely spread.
- ✓ Give trees near homes, roads, high-value areas, and young hosts closer attention.

● MANAGE THE NEXT STAND

REMOVE SOURCES, FAVOR NON-HOSTS

Long-term structure drives long-term results.

- ✓ Prune isolated infected branches only when adequate healthy crown can remain.
- ✓ Remove heavily infected trees where appropriate and protect clean regeneration.
- ✓ Favor non-host species and maintain separation from infected overstory seed sources.

✓ START HERE

- ✓ Confirm host species and search for shoots, swellings, and brooms.
- ✓ Mark the location and apparent severity of each infected tree or group.
- ✓ Identify clean young trees and non-host species worth protecting.
- ✓ Develop a phased plan with a forester; recheck treated areas regularly.

▲ THE RAVEN WORKS PERSPECTIVE

Dwarf mistletoe is usually a long-term stand-management issue, not an emergency. Thoughtful decisions retain useful trees where reasonable while reducing infection sources and guiding regeneration toward a healthier future forest.

Confirm first. Manage sources. Protect the next generation.

Sources: Colorado State Forest Service and CSU Extension dwarf-mistletoe guidance.

◎ IN THE FIELD

Three facts shape practical mistletoe management:

SPREAD IS LOCAL

Seeds usually move from infected plants to nearby susceptible branches and trees.

PRUNING HAS LIMITS

Branch pruning may help selected trees, but trunk infections and heavy crowns need other choices.

SPRAYS DO NOT CURE

Shoot-suppressing products do not remove the internal infection and require label-directed use.