



## Poplar Gall Aphid Fact Sheet

### What causes galls or lumps on Poplars?

If you have noticed rather strange shaped lumps or galls on poplar trees they are the work of a very special aphid. They have an interesting story.

It all starts when the eggs which have been laid on the roots of poplar trees in autumn begin to hatch in spring. These young aphids find their way into the soft new spring leaves and begin to feed on the leaf stalk (petiole).

They secrete a chemical into the leaf stalk that induces the poplar to grow this protective gall around each aphid. The aphid then gives birth to up to 200 young aphids that begin also to feed. Some of these develop fully and produce wings at which point they exit the gall through an opening and fly off to find alternate hosts. You can make out the opening beginning to form at the bottom of the photo on the right.

They can fly several kilometres which is quite a feat for a small insect. They then find plants from the daisy family (including lettuce) and the Brassica family (cabbages, broccoli, stock etc) and feed on either the roots or crown of these hosts. In autumn these insects then head home to the poplar tree to mate and lay eggs for the next generation to follow on for the next year.



These aphids do not cause much damage at all to the poplar tree so no treatment is required. The aphids feeding on lettuce and brassicas in vegetable gardens do of course do some damage and may require treatment in extreme cases.