


what's buggin' ya?

AN EDUCATIONAL NEWSLETTER ON MANAGING INSECTS IN OUR ENVIRONMENT
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There has been a lot happening in the news and in our yards related to insects this season! Read on to get the real scoop on what's going on!

 Molly Keck

THE INVASION OF CRAZY ANTS ???

Recently, a new species of ant, called the Raspberry Crazy Ant or Caribbean Crazy Ant was discovered in Texas. This is the first introduction to the United States, and it is still being questioned as to whether this ant is a completely new species. Until last month, this ant was restricted to the Houston area, and surrounding counties. In the areas where they have been found, major efforts have been underway to learn more about their biology and management.

Unfortunately, they have recently been positively identified in Bexar County. Most likely, they were introduced through landscaping materials (turf, mulch, or plant material). The media has caught wind of this new finding and now the public should be very well aware of it. Unfortunately, in my opinion, the media has not been accurately portraying the entire story and have caused some unnecessary panic by omitting some important information.

For one, Raspberry Crazy Ants are not the only type of crazy ant in Texas. We have a species which was introduced several decades ago (most likely from Africa) called *Paratrechina longicornis*. Let's call that one our "old crazy ant" for simplicity purposes. This Crazy Ant has been well established in the landscape of San Antonio and most of you have probably come across them. The recent rain following our long drought has made them a little more active than in previous years. But, some may tell you they have always been active in their yards and this year is no different. The fact is we have a crazy ant that has been here for a long time. No one has ever really been too worried about them.... until the Raspberry Crazy Ant story came out!

Our old crazy ants nest under concrete, rocks, debris, brick walkways, asphalt, etc. They are erratic in their movement, small to medium sized ants, and dark brown or black. They

have very long legs and antennae in proportion to their body and don't run in a straight trail – hence the name, crazy ant. They may enter indoors and can be found in electrical units, computers, video game stations, and other such electronic devices.

Raspberry Crazy ants are lighter in color, a little smaller, and (in my opinion) don't run quite as erratically. They do not form a trail and can be found in mulch, landscaping, under debris, and sometimes entering homes. They do not sting, do not pose a medical threat to humans other than stress, and can be problematic because of their tendency to be attracted to electrical units and devices. The fact that their numbers can become immense allowing them to literally take over an area and displace the native fauna is one reason why they are considered such a threat. In addition, they are an extreme nuisance and very difficult to control. Only a licensed pest control professional can provide some relief to their persistence.

Right now, the spread of the Raspberry Crazy Ant is our fault. We move plant materials, mulch, etc. and we accidentally move the ants with us. Be very careful when you move these items from one location to the other.

If you believe you have the Raspberry Crazy Ant, you can send a sample to the Extension Office for identification. If they look like the Raspberry Ant, I will send them to A&M for confirmation. Chances are you are worried about the same old crazy ant that we've always had! But, we are always here for those that are concerned! (3355 Cherry Ridge, Suite 212, San Antonio, TX 78230)

Raspberry Crazy Ant
Photo courtesy of
<http://urbanentomology.tamu.edu>



Crazy Ant – *Paratrechina longicornis*
Photo by: Bart Drees

MASSIVE TERMITE SWARM AFTER THE RAINS

You may have noticed many to millions of winged insects swarming after the recent rains. These brownish insects with long wings are Agricultural or Desert Termites. Blame it on the drought again! In dry years, we see an increase of desert termites in yards. These termites are common in any landscape, but when it is dry, they go looking for food above ground.



Desert Termites are not wood eating termites, so they will not try to enter the home as a structural pest. These termites eat roots, grasses, forbes and other such plants.

We tend to see massive swarms after a good, long rain, following an

extensive drought. That combination of elements equals perfect swarming conditions.

Desert termites may be attracted to porch lights, light colored houses, metal roofs, or reflective glass.

I would never recommend treating for desert termites, especially if all you see are the swarmer. They are not structural pests, they will not enter your home and eat the wood, and treating for them will do nothing but waste your money and put out unnecessary pesticide in the environment.

If a company tells you have to treat for these termites, - run away! If you are still worried, send a sample to the office, we'll identify them positively so you know if it's something to worry about.

If you notice above ground mud tubes all over your yard, these are also desert termites. Just rake over them daily to disturb them and force them away or under the soil. If you must treat them, make sure you open the tubes first or the pesticide won't touch any of the termites. You will only kill what you touch, but chances are tomorrow you will find new tubes and new termites, so I never recommend this a good option. Breaking up the tubes, watering the yard well, and maintaining a healthy lawn will get your much farther than pesticides with these insects.

Insect Questions and Answers

Q. Can all spiders harm you?

A. No! Spiders are wonderful animals to have around the landscape! They are predators and they are interesting to watch. We do have two venomous spiders in Texas, the brown recluse and black widow. You would probably be surprised at how many you have in your yard, but these are spiders that like to hide in dark, undisturbed places. Not out in the open in your garden. Be thankful for the spiders you have. They may be creepy, but they are also very cool!

Q. We've had rain and my plants still aren't blooming or growing. What gives? Is it insect damage?

A. Probably not. The thing is, a few days of good rain may not be enough to make up for two years worth of drought damage. In addition, we have had harsh rain, strong winds, cool weather and hot weather. Plants don't like this! Most damage I am seeing is physical damage, not insect damage. Remember it takes time to make up for years of drought. Its not going to gt4 better overnight.

Upcoming Programs

Oct 30th Spiders: Spooky or Cool?
(adults @ 2pm, youth @ 4:30pm)

January 26th Kitchen Kritters

February 23rd Termites 101 for Homeowners

**The above held at the Extension Office (3355 Cherry Ridge, Suite 212 from 2pm-4pm; free and open to the public.

Entomology is blogging now! The Bexar County blog is getting started. Visit for pest of the month articles, answers for your insect questions and more! Please be patient, it is still in the beginning phases:

<http://bexarento.blogspot.com>



For More Info on Insects of Pest Management Contact:

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