

# what's buggin' ya?

AN EDUCATIONAL NEWSLETTER ON MANAGING INSECTS IN OUR ENVIRONMENT  
Molly E. Keck, IPM Specialist, Texas AgriLife Extension Service – Bexar County

SUMMER 2008

Summer, heat and drought are upon us now. There are a few insects that seem to be prevalent this year. Read on to learn more about who's out and about in the heat!  Molly Keck

## Webworms - They're BA--ACK!

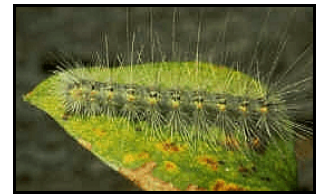
The first generations of the fall webworms are emerging and making webs already! If you would like to prevent their webbing and defoliation, now is a good time to start. Fall webworms have 4 generations, with each generation becoming more numerous. Fall is the last and most damaging generation.



S. G. Hutto '07

Fall webworms are caterpillars that form a webbing around branches and leaves and feed on the leaves, defoliating trees. They do not kill the tree, or really hurt it -- they just make it look bad.




Before you treat, break open the webs as best as you can - this allows pesticides to penetrate, and natural enemies such as wasps and birds can feed on the pests to help cut down on the population. Organic pesticide options include Bt and spinosad. Non-organic options include carbaryl and malathion.



Use spray formulations. Ready-to-use formulations are easier and reduce the exposure risk to you. Remember to always read the label - even if it's an organic product. Organic products are pesticides too! For more info, see AgriLife Extension publication E-223 - Fall Webworm. <http://agrilifebookstore.org>



### 2008 Entomology Educational Seminar Series

June 12	Integrated Pest Management in the Garden	
July 24	Termites 101 for Homeowners	
August 7	Good Bugs, Bad Bugs	
September 25	Ants in Your Plants	
October 23	Pantry Pests	
October 30	Spiders: Who's Bad, Who's Good?	

Presented by Molly Keck, Integrated Pest Management Program Specialist & Entomologist for Texas AgriLife Extension Service, Bexar County



All programs will be held 2-4pm at the Bexar County AgriLife Extension Office:  
3355 Cherry Ridge, Suite 208  
San Antonio, TX 78230



Space is limited: Please RSVP by the Monday before each class to Molly Keck (210/467-6575)

We will seek to provide reasonable accommodations for our events for all persons with disabilities. We request that you contact our office at least two weeks in advance of an event to advise us of the auxiliary aid or service that you require.

Education programs of the Texas AgriLife Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, sex, disability, religion, age, or national origin.

## Myth - Walking Sticks Are Harmful

If you live in the Hill Country or northern San Antonio, you probably have Giant Texas Walking Sticks all over your landscape every two years or so.

There is a long-lived myth that Walking Sticks are poisonous. They are not. Walking Sticks are harmless, slow-moving, fascinating, and extremely tenacious insects – one of our employees had one attached to the rim of her wheel, and it survived the 20 mile trip to work completely unharmed! Walking Sticks are plant feeders, but seldom do enough damage to be noticeable. In our area they become active in late spring through summer. You can find them in the trees, on the eaves, and clinging to the side of your house.



Walking Sticks can emit a foul odor when irritated, but are not poisonous. They have chewing mouthparts, but don't bite. They do have spines along their legs that allow them to cling to your clothes, skin, or hair, which may be alarming, but they are harmless.

If you have an invasion of walking sticks this year, just enjoy or ignore them. There is no reason to kill them, and you would do far more damage to your beneficial insects if you sprayed, than you would to the Walking Sticks.

## Be Cool Around the Centipedes

If you live in the Hill Country or northern San Antonio, you may have noticed large, scary, centipedes either in your yard or crawling onto the house. While these creatures are frightening, unless touched or handled, they will not harm you. Centipedes do not come into the house to nest, they enter looking for moisture. Now that we are encountering a drought, the centipede's preferred moist habitat is drying up, and they are in search of a new home.

Centipedes love to live in protected areas such as under stones, bark, leaf litter, and rotting logs. A good rule of thumb is that if it is a place you are afraid you may encounter a scorpion, it is also a great home for a centipede.



Centipedes are predators, and feed on other arthropods such as insects. They have venom claws under their heads that they use for protection and to kill their prey. If handled, they can use those claws as a weapon against you.

Many people describe the pain to be similar to a wasp or bee sting. Although it isn't deadly, it is extremely painful.

A common centipede found in San Antonio is the Texas Red Headed Centipede. These can cut the skin with claws on each leg and drop venom, which can be painful and irritating. The best rule of thumb is to never touch or handle a centipede found in the wild.

Centipedes are different from millipedes because they have fewer legs, and millipedes are harmless.

To prevent centipedes, don't allow their hiding places to be close to the house. Move compost piles, firewood, rocks away from the house. If you have flower beds near the house, overturn the mulch regularly, and try placing a band of gravel around the flower bed to prevent centipedes from crossing. Look for any holes in the home that allows light to penetrate and seal them tightly (check around doors and windows especially).

Treatment for homes that are already experiencing centipedes should also follow the guidelines for prevention. In addition, treat crack and crevices and baseboards indoors. Use products that contain the active ingredients: lambda-cyhalothrin, cypermethrin, permethrin or bifenthrin. Diatomaceous earth in cracks and crevices may also provide some control. Outdoors, do perimeter sprays around the foundation that contain the active ingredients: deltamethrin, permethrin, bifenthrin or cypermethrin. Remember, you must remove hiding places to provide any type of control.

For more information, check out Texas AgriLife Extension publication: Centipedes and Millipedes - E-217 by IPM Entomologist, Wizzie Brown.

## Insect Questions & Answers

**Q. Can Carpenter ants be eating and killing my tree?**

**A.** No - Very unlikely. Carpenter ants do not feed on trees; they hollow out a "home" and live inside the wood – but they do not feed on wood. Carpenter ants are attracted to dead and compromised trees, just as woodpeckers are. If you have carpenter ants in your tree, something else is causing the health of the tree to deteriorate.

**Q. Will dry weather kill the fleas?**

**A.** No, they actually seem to be worse! Remember that flea control consists of a 3-part treatment: outside, inside, and pets. All must be treated at the same time. For more information see Extension publications E-433 - Controlling Fleas, or E-149 - Flea Control at <http://agriflifebookstore.org>.

**Q. Where can I go for help with snakes or other wildlife?**

**A.** For snake questions, contact the South Texas Herpetology Association at 210/520-6101. For wildlife, contact Wildlife Management Control at 210/472-5451.

Unless otherwise noted, all photographs courtesy of Molly Keck & TAMU Entomology / Texas AgriLife Extension staff.



## Summer 2008

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