Fall Newsletter 2013

what's buggin' ya?

AN EDUCATIONAL NEWSLETTER ON MANAGING INSECTS IN OUR ENVIRONMENT

Molly E. Keck, IPM Program Specialist, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service – Bexar County

Hard to believe it already fall! Especially when it still feels like summer. We've had some insect swarms, fire ants popping up and are planting our fall gardens. Read on to learn what to expect and how to manage the insect pests!

Molly Keck

GREEN JUNE BUG SWARMS

No, they are not Japanese Beetle or the beetles that will eat your turf. We are seeing (or recently did see) a mating swarm of Green June Bugs.

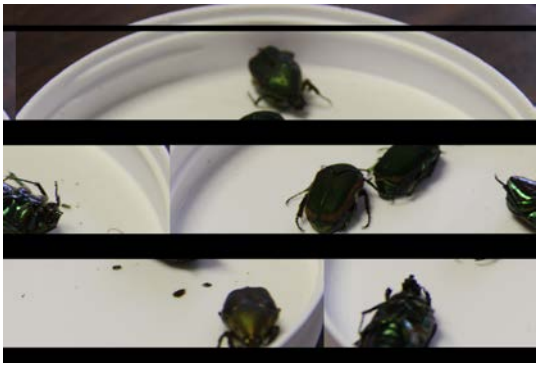
These are large beetles, about 1 inch in size, metallic green and very similar in size and shape to regular old brown May Beetles or June Bugs.

Green June Bugs are basically harmless. After mating they will be laying their eggs in compost, manure, and other like materials. The larvae can be considered beneficial because they are recyclers and decomposers.

The adults may cause damage to fruits, especially soft fruits like pears. I have seen them congregating on the fruit in large numbers, chewing holes in them and ruining the pears. If this is an issue for you, try using some sort of netting over the tree, if it is small enough. Given that these beetles aren't going to be around very long, pesticides aren't the best, most economical or most environmentally friendly option.

Green June Bugs are usually seen in large numbers either on a tree, or flying around trees. They are loud fliers, and not always the best flier – bumping into building and sometimes even people! They will not bite or hurt you. They are strong, and you'll learn this if you pick up a live one and try to hold it in your hand.

They may be annoying, but give them a week or two more, and you won't see these Green June Bugs again for another year!



FALL IS A GREAT TIME TO TREAT FOR FIRE ANTS

Fire ants can be seen everywhere now that we had some good, long rainfall in South Central Texas! I hear all the time that dry weather gets rid of fire ants, but in fact they were always there. When it rained, the ground became saturated and they moved their nest up, pushing up the soil and making a fluffy mound.

Fire ants are a pest to nearly everyone. Perhaps their only redeeming quality is that they help control ticks and fleas in the landscape, although they do not eradicate them.

If you are having a problem with fire ants and want to manage them, fall is one of the best times to treat. Baits are a good option, and will help control unseen mounds. You use a small amount of pesticide with baits, and fire ants remove it from the environment, taking it back to the nest to feed to other members of the colony. Unfortunately, you need to wait until the ground dries up some and rain is not forecasted for at least 48 hours.

There are many different types of baits available, but application is probably the single most important factor. Use when fire ants are foraging – if it's hot, apply early evening or late afternoon. If its 80 or below, anytime is adequate. Don't let bait get wet, and broadcast evenly over the lawn. Remember not to apply more than the label recommended rate – we find in field research that more is not better, it actually has worse management results. A little goes a long way, because its *food* for the fire ants!

For more information about fire ants, visit eXtension.org/fire+ants

Fall Gardening and Pest Management

Fall is here and, for some, it's the best time to veggie garden! Cole crop like broccoli, cabbage, lettuces, cauliflower all do well with the cooler temperatures. But along with cole crops, always come cabbage loopers. Don't let the name trick you – cabbage loopers do not just feed on cabbages. While they prefer cole crops, I have seen on nearly everything in a garden, including radishes.

Last fall, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service in Bexar County conducted a field trail on cabbage looper and best management practices. We had 252 cabbages and treated them either Spinosad, *Bacillus thuringiensis kurstaki (Bt)*, Molasses, Carbaryl, and alternating treatments of Spinosad and *Bt* and alternating treatment of Spinosad and *Bt* with Molasses added.

What we found was that if you follow good cultural control practices: (watering at least twice a week, maintaining moist soil, pre-fertilizing, staying weed free, and planting cabbages the proper spacing from one another [we used 12 inch center spacing]), you can go without treating and still produce cabbage heads that are not significantly smaller or of less aesthetic value than those treated with any pesticides. However, the outer leaves are all eaten and we definitely had some loss of cabbages. It was a testament to using the best cultural control practices and that happy plants have fewer pest damage.

Overall, Spinosad had fewer cabbage looper damage from the get-go. Bt started off slower, with more damage (holes in leaves, more of the overall leaves with holes), but by the end of the study, it was right up there with Spinosad treated plants.

Cabbage Loopers in various instars (sizes) Photo by: Molly Keck

When you alternate with Spinosad and Bt, you hit a middle ground and adding Molasses did nothing to help.

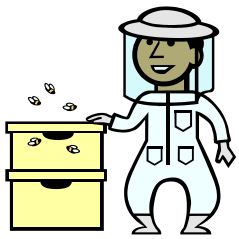
Incidentally, using Molasses only showed less damage than treating with nothing, but it dyed the cabbages and make them look burnt. You would get nearly the same results as doing nothing at all, so if you want a nicer cabbage or cole crop, I wouldn't suggest using *only* Molasses.

Carbaryl (Sevin) products preformed the poorest. But, if you read the label, you will see that loopers are specifically mentioned as not being affected! Another reason why we should read that label carefully!

Our treatment regimen was applying a liquid insecticide every 2 weeks for a total of 10 weeks of plant growth. Our cabbages averaged 3 lbs! Nearly twice the size of the cabbages you purchase at the store. We had a bumper crop, but remember cultural control is key to any good garden!

Beekeeping Basics – Want to be a Beekeeper?

We still have some room! If you want to be a beekeeper or just want to know what it's all about, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension is hosting a Beekeeping Basics program, October 11th and 12th with a one day, full day classroom day and a partial day field day. You'll learn from actual beekeepers and visit a real backyard apiary, put on a bee suit and see if you have what it takes to get started! This is a unique program you won't find anywhere else.



We still have a few spots open so please contact me if you are interested. We host this program in the Spring and Fall, and if you can't make it in October, ask me how to get on the Spring 2014 program list.

Please visit hhtp://bexar-tx.tamu.edu for more information. Click on the Events or Insects Tab. Or contact me!

For More Info on Insects of Pest Management Contact:
Molly Keck
Integrated Pest Management Program Specialist
3355 Cherry Ridge, Suite 212
San Antonio, TX 78230
210-467-6575
mekeck@ag.tamu.edu

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