It sure seems like the bugs are more active and more abundant this summer. Read on to see what to expect the next few months!

Molly Keck

**Bees more abundant this year?**

I have had many calls from media outlets asking if there are more bees this year than previous years. That’s a hard question to answer, but I think in general, the answer is probably “yes”.

You may have heard of a few bee attacks in the news recently. I think this has sparked the interest in bee populations. Every spring, honey bees collect nectar and pollen, the queen lays many more eggs, and they work hard making honey and more bees. This spring, we had great rains, and it was a wonderful nectar producing year for bees. This allowed them to collect more food to feed more baby bees, and their populations were built up.

A bee colony can only support so many bees. So, when the population is too high and the old queen is healthy enough, they will split. The old queen will lay eggs in queen cells; they will hatch and be fed a special diet of royal jelly. Meanwhile, the old queen will leave with a large portion of the colony to find a new home. With more nectar this spring meaning more bees, this means more colonies likely split and overall, more colonies than there may have been last year.

Honey bees are notorious for making their colonies in voids. They love to fill voids and this can be anything from under the eaves of your home, inside a wall, a hollow part of a tree, or even a barbeque pit. It may happen quickly, and you may never know that colony has taken up residence until you get too close.

Honey bees are social insects, and they are programmed to protect their queen, hive, and babies (called brood). If something threatens one of those things, they will attack.

Mowing or using other equipment is usually what motivates a colony to attack. The vibrations from the machine travel to the hive and the bees react. If you are ever attacked by bees, run indoors or toward a vehicle and turn the AC on full blast at your face. Pull your shirt over your head – bees like to sting the ears, eyes, and temple areas (hottest regions of the body). Get as far away as possible and seek medical attention, especially if you have an allergy.

It is important to remember that bees are wild animals. They can be cranky and even when they seem to be unprovoked, they can get mad! Even beekeepers who manage hive that are docile can tell you that if they do something to disturb the hive (move it, etc.), it may take several days for them to calm down. They become highly agitated and it doesn’t take much to set them off. So, always be careful around bees, even if you have come to trust them.

**What do I do about ants?**

When things heat up, ants start to move indoors, looking for moisture, food and a cool place to hang out. There are 100’s of species of ants in Texas, and while only a handful are pest species, it is extremely important to know what ant you are dealing with if you want good control. Bring several samples by the Extension Office and I will take a look for you.

In general, you need to find the source, or reason, why the ants have moved indoors. If they are attracted to food, remove the food. If they are going after water in the sink or dishwasher, try to keep that dry. Some species respond well to baits, while others do not. Be sure to get your ant identified so you have a good management plan.
**WHITE GRUBS AND LAWNS**

Lawns are looking pretty good right now, if you took care of them this spring. But, come very soon, they will start showing signs of stress from the intense heat and lack of rain. Water restrictions will get harsher and we’ll soon be able to tell who isn’t following the rules or who has a rainwater harvesting system!

When lawns start to look bad (and let’s face it, its San Antonio – this happens every summer!), we start to blame the bugs. As part of any good integrated pest management system, you don’t want to treat for insects that aren’t there or aren’t abundant enough to cause damage. Preventive treatments are usually a waste of time and money and put out unnecessary amounts of pesticide.

White grubs are what we usually turn to when we see the lawns looking patchy. White grubs are beetle larvae that feed on the roots of the turf. They cause irregular, dead patches in the turf, but this damage is very similar to fungus and other diseases. It is important to know if you have grubs before you treat.

Right now, the adults are mating, laying eggs, and those eggs will be hatching soon. Around mid-July in our area, the larvae will be actively feeding on the turf. In August we will notice the damage. If you see damage now or did in the spring – it was not grubs! Around July, cut a foot patch and peel back the grass. Do this in about 3-4 spots in a typical neighborhood sized yard. If you have 5 or more grubs per patch, it is justification to treat. If not, there are not enough grubs to be doing any damage and no need to treat.

Another question I regularly get is what these grubs look like. If you are finding large, C-shaped grubs in your lawn or garden, leave them alone. They are composting and breaking down organic matter. White grubs are much smaller, and my general rule of thumb is anything over ½ an inch is probably a good guy.

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**Summer Garden Expectations**

- Spider mites will be abundant with heat. Increased watering and air flow, reducing drought and heat stress, or foliar treatments of soapy water or malathion may give some relief.
- Look for lacebugs. They are lacy winged bugs that hang out on the underside of flowering plants. You will see dark specs as well (their feces). Moving plants out of the sun and into partial shade can drop populations. Foliar sprays where the lacebugs are found and constant monitoring will help.
- Remember that summer is not an ideal time to plant veggies or even flowers. The heat is very hard on them. If you have plants from your spring garden and they are overrun by insects, this is a good indication that it’s time to put them to sleep. Insects are often the cleanup crew.

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**Upcoming Programs**

- July 9-11<sup>th</sup> Insects in the Classroom: Teacher Workshop
- July 16-19<sup>th</sup> Bug Camp
- July 23-26<sup>th</sup> Bug Camp
- Aug 21<sup>st</sup> 30 Bugs Every Gardener Should Know
- Oct 30<sup>th</sup> Bed Bugs 101

For more information, times and cost, please contact Molly at 210-216-5566 or mekeck@ag.tamu.edu

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**For More Info on Insects or 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