



# What's Buggin' Ya?

Winter 2015

TEXAS A&M  
AGRI LIFE  
EXTENSION



## Upcoming Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Events:

January 8, 15, 22, 28—Associate Certified Entomologist Prep Course. \$35.

January 30—Spring Teacher Youth Garden Training. \$20

February 12—CEU Course. 6 CEUs. \$60.

February 19—Interpreting the Pesticide Label.

March 5—Spring Open House! Youth Event. \$2

March 14-17—Spring Break Nature Camp—\$110

For more information visit <http://bexar-tx.tamu.edu>

Please contact the AgriLife Extension office to register. Pre registration **REQUIRED** for many programs listed above.

## Kissing Bugs and Chagas Disease

If you've watched the news lately, you have likely watched a story on kissing bug and disease it transmits: Chagas.

Kissing bugs are large bugs - ranging in length, but the most common in Central TX about 1 inch. They are not new to the US, but you are hearing about them, because we are now looking for them. More and more research is being conducted on these bugs.

Kissing bugs have piercing/sucking mouthparts and feed on blood of many different animals including birds, lizards, mammals and humans.

Chagas is caused by a parasite called a Trypanosoma which is vectored by the kissing bug through their feces. Trypanosoma can enter the body by rubbing the feces into a wound, orally, through blood transfusions or organ transplants, and even congenitally.

Dogs are especially at risk to Chagas, likely because they consume the bugs.

They also may sleep or rest outdoors where kissing bugs may be found.

Kissing bugs like to hide in debris and cracks and crevices. Seal up windows, vents, and other entrances to prevent them from entering the home. Keeping debris cleaned up and wood piles away from the home will also discourage them.

If you are concerned you or your pet was bitten, see a physician or veterinarian for a blood test.

Many insects resemble kissing bugs. To have an insect identified contact your local extension office.

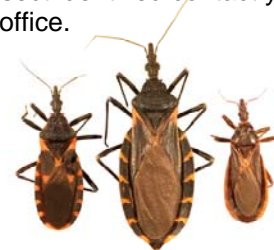


Photo: Dr. Gabe Hammer

## Foreign Grain Beetles—Tiny Beetles in New Homes and Construction

In the past year, I have had several calls on a tiny little beetle, often found in large numbers in new homes that can stump homeowners and pest management professionals, alike.

These beetles are foreign grain beetles, an occasional storage pest that feeds on grain when it becomes wet and moldy.

In new construction they can be found when the drywall or wood isn't properly dried. With excess rain and humidity this year, it isn't surprising that many people encountered them. While they may be alarming in large numbers, they are merely a nuisance. Unless you have moldy grain, they will

not infest other items. However, if moisture continues to persist due to leaky pipes, leaks in roofs, etc., they have no reason to leave. To manage them, you must dry things up. Improve ventilation, use dehumidifiers, check for leaks in plumbing and excess moisture building up around foundations. Once the moisture source is eliminated, the beetles will clear up on their own.

Since they can be living inside walls, it is difficult for pest management professionals or you to manage them with residual pesticides alone.



Photo: S. Ciano

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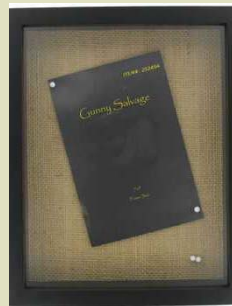
## Gift Ideas for the Entomologist in Your Life

While it may be a little late to order these for Christmas this year, if you have ever wondered what to get your entomologist, here are a few ideas!

1 - Insect Collecting Kit. Bioquip (bioquip.com) sells a couple of these, ranging from around \$42 to \$120. These collection kits have everything you need to collect and mount insects for amateurs to professionals. Both basically contain the same materials, one is just a better quality and "really fancy". They have the basics you need: pins, insect net, forceps, a spreading board, and a collection box.



Bioquip.com



2 - Display Case for Collections. Every entomologist loves to show off their collections and there are a number of options out there, in various sizes. Glass covered display cases can be mounted to the wall or placed on tables as art work - everyone loves to look at an insect collection! Craft stores sell shadow boxes with a fabric backing that insect pins fit into. You can find these at Hobby Lobby or Michaels. While these are great to hang on walls because they already have the hardware and are an inexpensive option, they are not air tight, so you'll need to remember to use moth balls or ??? to prevent dermestid beetles from ruining your collection. Bioquip, hobby stores and scientific stores may carry more airtight boxes.

3 - A Professional Insect Net. Dinky nets can be found at the dollar store, but a real entomologist needs a good net! Hobby and science shops and Bioquip sell a range of nets. You can find various diameters for the nets and various lengths of the stick. My personal favorite is the dual net - they are strong enough to take a beating in some brush, but light enough to catch butterflies out of the air.

Bioquip.com



4 - A Good Identification Field Guide. There are soooo many out there! My suggestion is to try to find one that is local to your region or state. At the very least, choose a field guide for insects found in North America.  
A Field Guide to Texas Insects. B. Drees & J. Jackman.

5 - A LIVE TARANTULA! Every entomologist has some live arthropod they keep as a pet. You can find suppliers everywhere, even pet stores. I enjoy shopping from breeders. They generally know more about the specimen they are selling you and can help you choose the right species for your tastes: something you can handle easily versus something flashy and pretty. You can find breeders at reptile and exotic shows or online. My suggestion is to ask to hold the tarantula first - that way you know if you are comfortable with it before you take it home. You'll also know if it's too fast or skitzzy for you.