



# what's buggin' ya?

AN EDUCATIONAL NEWSLETTER ON MANAGING INSECTS IN OUR ENVIRONMENT  
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*We have a had a mix of cold(ish) weather and unseasonably warm weather, which is really confusing insects and will probably make for a very interesting spring and summer. Here are a few of the insects that have made an appearance the beginning of this winter. Happy Holidays and Happy New Year!*



Molly Keck

## LIFECYCLE OF A LADYBUG



Everybody knows ladybugs are good guys, but not everyone knows the lifecycle of a ladybug. It's easy to forget that the spotted beetle we see is one small portion of the ladybug's life. Just like a butterfly, they have an egg, larva, pupa and adult form.

Many people think insect eggs are impossible to see, but many can be seen by the naked eye.

Ladybug eggs are unique in that they are brightly colored and pop out with a green leaf as a background. Any bright yellow colored eggs laid in a cluster, I would consider ladybug eggs and leave alone!



The ladybug larva comes in various color patterns of orange or red and black. Different species and different ages will determine the exact color pattern, but the all take on the same

shape and general appearance. We like ladybug larvae in our garden because they are great predators of bad bugs such as aphids. In fact, they may eat more as larva than as adults (think the teenage appetite versus the adult appetite).



After the larva has eaten some good meals and molted several times, it will shed its last larval skin and emerge as a pupa. The pupa does not eat and is stationary on the plant. They may appear to be a large egg, gall or growth of the plant.

Finally, the adult will emerge to eat more aphids, mate, and continue the lifecycle.

Ladybug larva and adults love to eat aphids, but will also attack mealybugs, scales, and other small, soft bodied insects. If you have aphids, you will see ladybugs, and for most plants ladybugs will help reduce aphids enough that chemical control is not needed.

## THE LARGEST CATERPILLAR I HAVE EVER SEEN!

This November and December, I have been getting many questions about a humongous caterpillar found around homes! They are as long as your hand, ticker than your thumb, and frankly, very scary, although harmless. Even I have to admit when I saw one, I was frightened and a little grossed out! These caterpillars are a type of hornworm, and while I don't know their exact species, they will turn into a sphinx moth of some sort. This particular species has been found on esperanzas.

The one pictured is significantly darker in color than others I have been shown, they are usually lighter green and have the same striped type pattern with a hook or horn at the hind end.

They won't cause much damage to the plant – at least I wasn't able to see significant damage with two of these guys living on one. When I attempted to keep them to see what they would turn into after pupating, they died. So, my suggestion is to take a few pictures, enjoy it in nature, but let it live out its life outside.





## MEXICAN HONEY WASPS CONTINUE TO TURN HEADS



Mexican Honey Wasps are a relatively new insect to the United States. As their name indicates, they are from Mexico and South America, but have started migrating up into Texas and have been here for several years now. They can be a bit disturbing to people who look up into their tree and find a huge nest.

Mexican Honey Wasps are relatively docile wasps. If you were to saw the nest down, or climb into the tree to aggravate them, they can and will sting, but left alone, they will leave humans alone as well.

They are usually noticed as the leaves start to drop from the trees and aren't hiding the nest any longer. Mexican Honey Wasps are unique in

that they are one of the few organisms, other than honeybees that actually produce honey – although I have no idea how it tastes!

If you happen to be one of the lucky ones that has a Mexican Honey Wasps in their tree, and they are not in an area that causes you concern, it is best to leave it alone. They usually don't last long, they will either die off in the winter or leave and start a new nest. As mentioned, they are very docile – rarely swarming around the nest, usually just running along the outside. I even had a person tell me they caught it on fire with a blow torch to see if they could burn it up and the wasps didn't attack him! (NOT at all a recommendation for management!!!)



For more information about Mexican Honey Wasps, visit: <http://www.texasento.net/Brachygastra.htm>. All photographs used in this article can be found at that site.

### TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION



## Want to learn more about bugs?

Here are some of the programs scheduled for 2013.



When	Where	Topic
January 16 <sup>th</sup> 2-4pm	Bexar County Extension Office	Pantry & Fabric Pests
January 18 <sup>th</sup> 10-11:30am	Morningside Ministries 602 Babcock Rd.	What's Buggin' You? 20 Bugs Every Gardener Should Know * register through OASIS, oasisnet.org
February 15	Bexar County Extension Office	CEU Course for Pest Management Professionals
April 16 <sup>th</sup> 2-4pm	Bexar County Extension Office	30 Bugs Every Gardener Should Know *Cost - \$10

Please RSVP to Molly at [meckeck@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:meckeck@ag.tamu.edu) or 210-467-6575

Visit the Entomology Blog!

<http://bexarento.blogspot.com>

For More Info on Insects of Pest Management Contact:

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