

August 2009

Indoor and Outdoor Pest Tips

- Populations of pantry pests, like Indian meal moths, cigarette beetles and carpet beetles can build up over the summer because most people do less baking and infested products go unnoticed until the fall and winter. In late summer these insect are often found around windows trying to get out of your home. No chemical controls are recommended. These pests can be swept up or vacuumed. See our fact sheet on pantry pests for additional information.
- Do not spray pesticides in your garden unless you've observed a particular serious pest and the damage caused by the pest. Follow all label directions. Always select the shortest residual, least toxic insecticide to avoid killing beneficial insects.
- Monitor plants that are prone to pest problems for new signs or symptoms of insect damage or disease. Be sure you have accurately identified the problem before taking action. Cultural and environmental factors cause at least half of all the observed plant problems in home landscapes. If an insect pest or disease is the culprit, always select the least toxic solution.
- Avoid mosquito and midge problems by turning over any pots, lids or saucers that might collect water and create a breeding site. Also check clogged house gutters another favorite breeding place for mosquitoes and midges. Many people use corrugated drain pipe attached to downspouts to help move water away from their homes. The corrugations hold water and are a prime place for tiger mosquitoes to breed. To avoid the problem, use a smooth drain pipe or securely attach the corrugated drain pipe to the downspout and cover the open end with a piece of pantyhose secured with a rubber band. This will keep adult female mosquitoes and midges out of the drain pipe.
- Try to ignore hornet, bee and wasp nests found outside, especially if they are located in a tree. These are beneficial creatures that will not sting unless disturbed or provoked. However, if a hornet' or yellow jacket nest is a threatening nuisance such as under your deck or next to your door you can destroy it with labeled sprays at night. Do not spray during the day or all you will do is to make them really mad because they cannot get back into their nest.! Contact a pest control professional if yellow jackets are nesting inside the walls or attic of your home.
- You may notice the European hornet stripping the bark off shrubs and trees. This stripping of the bark is usually minor and does no real harm to a shrub or tree. The European hornet is a large yellow and brown hornet that nests in cavities in trees, stumps, wood piles, sheds, etc. and feeds on insects. Unlike most other wasps and hornets this one is a night flyer.
- Ponds - If mosquitoes are breeding in your pond and you have no fish to control them, try using a mosquito control product such as "mosquito dunks", which contain *B.t.israeliensis*, an effective microbial insecticide. Avoid spraying pesticides around your pond. Aquatic plants and animals are very sensitive to chemical sprays. Gambusia is a good fish to introduce to your pond for controlling mosquitoes. Goldfish, golden orf, rosie minnows and koi can also be added to the pond. Pond fish are also good at eating the eggs of the pond snail, a destructive pond pest.
- Ants - Many different types of ants may be found inside and outside the home. The largest is the carpenter ant, some are ½ inch long. Carpenter ants tend to nest in wood that has been previously damaged by wood rots or insects. You must locate the nest to control this pest. Try using bait stations to control minor infestations of indoor ants. Granular insecticides or bait stations labeled for outdoor use on ants are also available. See our fact sheet on carpenter ants for additional information.
- Earwigs are unique-looking insects that are reddish-brown, about 3/4- inches long. with a pair of pincers at the end of the abdomen They can be found inside and outside the home in moist areas and are most active in the evening. They are predators of insect pests, like aphids, but may also eat seedlings and chew holes in large plants. They are a nuisance pest, causing little damage. See our fact sheet on earwigs for additional information.

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Local Governments - U.S. Department of Agriculture Cooperating

- Slugs may cause round holes in the leaves of many different plants. Slugs reproduce around garden structures, like rock and railroad tie walls and in shaded, moist areas covered with thick groundcovers. You can control them with shallow containers of beer or a molasses, water and yeast mixture. The slugs are attracted to the yeast and crawl into the containers and drown. You can also set out boards and grapefruit rinds which will attract the slugs. Turn the boards and rinds over in the morning and destroy the slugs. See our fact sheet on slugs for additional information.

Have a pest or gardening question?

Call the Home and Garden Information Center

800-342-2507 www.hgic.umd.edu