

April 2009

Indoor and Outdoor Pest Tips

- Before applying an insecticide be sure that you have correctly identified the cause of your problem. Have you tried other solutions to the problem? Is an insecticide application warranted? If yes, select the least toxic pesticide, spray it only at the targeted pest on the affected plants. Spray early in the morning or at dusk to avoid harming pollinators and other beneficial insects.
- Attract beneficial insects by planting a large variety of flowering plants especially in the mint, dill and aster families. These flowers will provide nectar, pollen and cover for beneficials. Birdbaths and pans of water will provide the necessary water to keep beneficials from leaving your yard. Be sure to refresh regularly to avoid mosquitoes.
- Avoid mosquito and midge problems later this summer by turning over any pots, lids or saucers that might collect water and create a breeding site.
- Mining bees are active now. They are solitary bees that nest in underground burrows, fly low over the ground and make $\frac{1}{4}$ inch holes in loose soil. They are not aggressive and the males have no stinger.
- Wasps and bees are also very active. Carpenter bees cause concern at this time of year. They make clean, round holes about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch in diameter. They usually will not bother wood that is freshly painted or stained. They can be a problem in weathered and untreated wood. Contact a pest control professional if you're having a serious problem with carpenter bees.
- Fleas are sometimes observed in homes where there are no pets. The most likely source is an animal living in the attic, crawl space, fireplace or some other sheltered area connected to the inside of the home.
- The tick season is in full swing now. Wear light colored clothing and get in the habit of checking yourself, your children and pets closely for ticks after spending time outdoors. Repellents are also effective at keeping ticks at bay. Deer tick populations are especially high around the Chesapeake Bay.
- Termites and ants are actively swarming this month. Ants have a pinched waist like a wasp and termites have a straight waist. Ants have elbowed antennae and termites have straight antennae. Ant forewings are longer than the back wings and on termites they are the same length. Different types of ants may appear in your home. Try using bait stations to control minor infestations. Liquid and gel formulations are usually quite effective.
- Attract beneficial insects to your landscape by planting a wide variety of flowering annuals and perennials that will bloom over the entire growing season. Good choices are plants in the following families: daisy (marigolds, daises, asters, mums), carrot (dill, fennel, anise, yarrow, parsley) and mint (all mints and thymes.)
- Praying mantid egg cases are light brown masses that are glued to twigs around the landscape. Leave them alone and don't attempt to rear them indoors. These beneficial insects will hatch out this spring. Lady bird beetles that found their way inside your home should be escorted outside.
- Plant food plants this spring for butterfly larvae. Fennel and parsley attract swallowtails and butterfly weed attracts monarchs. Check out the book, *Butterflies of the Delmarva*, published by Tidewater Press for detailed information on area butterflies and how to attract them.
- Slug populations are high. They can be controlled with a directed spray of vinegar and water, with traps and baits and, of course, handpicking.

Educating People To Help Themselves

Local Governments - U.S. Department of Agriculture Cooperating

**Have a pest or gardening question?
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800-342-2507 www.hgic.umd.edu**