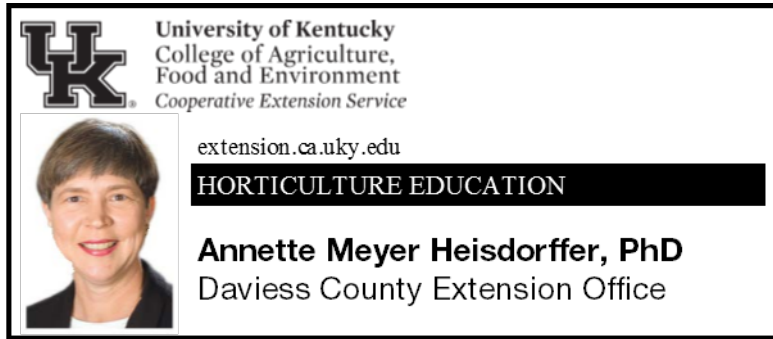


MESSENGER-INQUIRER



August 27, 2022

Keeping Accidental Insect Invaders Out

Even though accidental, insect invaders into the home in the fall are frustrating. A good example is the brown marmorated stink bugs that kept buzzing around the house from fall through late spring. Other insects start to look for places to overwinter as well as the day length shortens. Pest-proofing your home before the insects come inside to overwinter is the best management practice. Brown marmorated stink bugs, boxelder bugs, multicolored Asian lady beetles, and fall crickets are some of the targeted accidental invaders.

Mechanical exclusion is the best method for reducing the number of insects that get indoors. Cracks as small as 0.125 inch allow some insects to get inside. Seal cracks around windows, doors, siding, utility pipes, behind chimneys, and underneath the wood fascia and other openings with good quality silicone or silicone-latex caulk. Use expandable foam or other suitable material around pipes and wires in the foundation where there may be larger openings. Damaged screens on doors and windows should be repaired or replaced.

Exterior applications of insecticides may offer some minor relief from infestations where the task of completely sealing the exterior is difficult or impossible. Homeowner products containing the active ingredients deltamethrin, cyfluthrin, lambda-cyhalothrin, or permethrin are options. They should be applied as the insects begin to congregate. These insecticides are broken

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down by sunlight, so the residual effect will decrease and may not kill the insects beyond several days or a week. Follow label instructions. You may want to call a professional to apply the insecticide outdoors.

When these accidental invaders find their way into your home, use a vacuum to remove them. Dr. Ric Bessin, University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Specialist for Entomology, says insecticides are not recommended inside the home to control these pests. He also says you can put a knee-high stocking in the suction tube of the vacuum to decrease the number of bags needed. Drop the insects into a bucket of soapy water to kill them.

One insect finding a way into the home is brown marmorated stink bugs which accumulate on the sides of buildings during warm fall days. This pest was first identified in a home in Daviess County 7 years ago. During the summer months, it can be a serious pest of many fruit, vegetable, nursery, and field crops.

Stink bugs are roundish, shield-backed bugs with five-segmented antennae. The brown marmorated stink bug can be recognized as a relatively large and flattened stink bug. It gets its name from the marbled brown and gray colors on its back. The underside is variable in color but is much lighter than the upper side. To distinguish it from other similar stink bugs such as the brown stink bug, it has two wide, white, banded areas on the antennae. A hand lens can be used to see the bands. The abdomen of the brown marmorated stink bug extends past the wings, exposing light-colored 'triangles' past the wing edges. When disturbed, it leaves a cilantro-like odor and a stain after it is crushed. They do not bite humans or pests. Also, while overwintering in the home, they do not breed or reproduce.

Another accidental invader is the adult boxelder bugs. They are elongated, one-half-inch-long insects with sucking mouthparts. They are mostly black with red markings. Three narrow

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red lines appear on the segment behind the head, one down the center, and one on each side.

There is also a thin red inverted "V" located near the middle of the back. The wingless immature or nymphal stage has a black head, antennae, and legs. The red abdomen has an orange-yellow stripe and spot down the center of the back.

Boxelder bugs are another insect pest that may be seen on the sides of buildings during warm fall days in large numbers and can also be seen on tree trunks or branches sunning themselves on the south or west sides of buildings. They feed on sap from leaves, twigs, and seeds of boxelders, as well as other members of the maple family. They move into sheltered areas in the fall and remain there during winter.

The multicolored Asian lady beetles are found inside as well. They are pale yellow-orange to dark orange-red ladybugs with up to 19 black spots on the wing cover and a black "M" behind the head. Some of the beetles may not have spots. These beetles are beneficial outside the home. However, when disturbed, they produce a disagreeable odor and an objectionable yellowish secretion. They overwinter in the home and try to leave in the spring.

Fall field crickets get inside too. They hatch from eggs in the spring. By fall, the adults are about 0.5 to 1 inch long. They are normally dark black in color. Males produce the loudest mating call. They look for burrows or cracks to make their song even louder. They usually do not survive long in buildings because there is not enough food and it is too dry for them.

For more information, contact the Daviess County Cooperative Extension Service at 270-685-8480 or Annette.Heisdorffer@uky.edu. Additional information about pest-proofing your home can be found at <https://entomology.ca.uky.edu/files/efpdf3/ef641.pdf>.

Annette's Tip:

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As trees and shrubs are preparing for dormancy, avoid fertilizing them. Too much soil nitrogen encourages prolonged growth and interferes with dormancy. Fertilize trees and shrubs after they are dormant, which may be after Thanksgiving. Exceptions are azaleas and rhododendrons, which should be fertilized after blooming in the spring.

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