

Bugs, Bugs, Bugs December 2008

For the past couple of months, the primary concern was getting bees out of downed trees and removing swarms that formed from trees downed by the hurricanes. With the onset of cool to cold weather, we have a series of insects that need addressing.

1. **Aphids**—The Christmas holidays are getting closer, and many have purchased live Christmas trees. It is wise to take precautions when purchasing and to check the trees before bringing them inside. If the weather was been warm before you bring them inside, it would be good to shake them very well to see if you knocked out any aphids or lady beetles from the trees and act accordingly. If it was cold, the aphids may have been in the egg stage, and once inside they could hatch and migrate from the tree to adjacent walls, creating problems. The same is true of lady beetle eggs. If this occurs, the problem will be short-lived, and vacuuming is the best measure of control. Picking them up with cloths or towels may produce stains on your walls that in some cases are hard to remove. Be careful and save yourself some time and have a Merry Christmas.

Figure 1



2. **Firewood insects**—A very large complex of insects live in wood once it has been cut. When we cut firewood and stack it, this becomes an ideal host or home for several insects. Although these insects are secondary infesters, finding them in the house can be aggravating and scary. Long horned beetles, flat headed borers, ants, termites, some bees and wasps, and many other small insects may hide in the wood. Firewood should not be stored in the house. It should be keep outdoors where it is cool, and only what you are using immediately should be brought in. Otherwise, when brought into the warmth of a house, these insects that are using the wood to grow and develop think it is springtime and complete development and emerge in your home. To have them flying or running around the home can cause panic because wasps and fire ants can sting, and termites can infest your home. The other insects are just looking for a way out and will collect at windows or light sources. Figure 2.



LONG-HORNED BEETLES



FLAT-HEADED BORERS



3. Asian lady beetles—With the onset of cool weather, we have gotten reports of massive gatherings of these lady beetles. Although an excellent predator on aphids and other insects, when the weather turn cool in the fall, they begin to gather on trees, houses and other structures. On our homes they find every crack and crevice and get into the walls to overwinter. The problem here is the warmth and lights. Once they warm up, the lady beetles begin to actively move around. In most cases they are attracted to the light sources in the home and emerge from the walls through light fixtures and wall outlets. Once they're indoors, the safest way to remove them is through the use of a vacuum cleaner because grabbing them causes them defecate on the walls and furniture – in many situations causing stains. Where gatherings collect on outside walls, many fly indoors every time the door is opened. Where this occurs, the use of a pyrethroid around the doors and on the colony will repel them or make them move on. Figure 3.



- 4. Potted plants—Although they are not insects, they are a prime source for bringing indoors problem insects such as scales, mites, ants, termites, springtails, slugs and fungus gnats. Be sure to check the plants before bringing them inside. If an insect population exists, it will only continue to grow and develop once in the warm confines of the home. Where infestations exist, be sure to treat them before bringing the plant inside to reduce the problem with the pest and the odor of the pesticide. Always allow time before the plants are brought inside to clean up any problems. Scales excrete honeydew, and this will get on walls, floors and furniture and make them sticky, and if unchecked, sooty mold will develop. Ants can be a problem either from stings or foraging on holiday foods. Termites can get into your home and furniture, and fungus gnats and springtails can be an aggravation and can be difficult to manage. Figure 4.**



SPIDER MITES

SOFT SCALE ON HOUSE PLANT



5. **Case-making clothes moths**—Many hunters are opening their hunting gear and finding these fun-looking little boat- or cigar-shaped things along with moths flying out of the bag, box or closet where they were stored. These little moths are the case-making clothes moths. Although not very damaging, they can cause concern. They are primarily a pest of animal-origin materials, such as feathers, hair, fur, wools and such. They can be a problem on mounted trophies. Keeping hunting clothes clean can greatly reduce this minor problem. Figure 5.



6. Bees and wasps—The only colony to overwinter among bees and wasps is the honeybee. It is reduced in numbers, but the colony remains intact throughout the winter. Other bees and wasps only overwinter as queens who in the spring will begin their colonies or nests again. One of the primary places for honeybees to overwinter is the walls or attic of your home. These protected areas keep them from freezing or being exposed to the elements. The problem begins when the temperature outside warms or the heat from the house warms them up and they begin to fly around looking for a way out. Not knowing where they got in, they go to any light source and make their way out of the wall or attic – usually into the bedroom, family room or other room of the house. Although not aggressive, they can sting if sat on, stepped on, mashed in the hand or caught in clothing. To prevent this problem, check outside the house for any potential entrances and close them and make sure attic vents are screened. Those bees that get in the house will normally go to lights or windows and are many times are found dead or dying in light fixtures or on windowsills. The fly swatter is the easiest control. There’s no need to spray, and control is as good as your accuracy. Figure 6.



7. Buck moths—To tell how much of a problem you could have next year, watch for the flying adults. They have been out for about a month, but in Baton Rouge and around campus they are very light. It appears they are in the down cycle now, and we can expect resurgence in about two years. Figure 7.



8. **Pest management**—Many of us want to reduce the use of pesticides where possible. Where you have had a high population of the eastern or forest tent caterpillars now is the time to do a little pest management. With the leaves gone on all but the live oaks, you can check for egg masses on live oaks, sweet gum, cherry, willow and many other trees they infest. Just remove the case shown in the picture, and for each one removed you remove about 80 to 100 eggs or caterpillars from your tree next year. That means more foliage and less stress on your tree, which makes it healthier and stronger. Figure 8.



9. **Millipedes**—This non-insect arthropod at times can become a nuisance in and around the home. These multi-legged individuals have two pairs of legs per body segment. They are usually found in damp places – under mulch, in thatch, under leaves, stones or boards, in rotten wood or in the soil. They are primarily organic feeders, although some are living-plant feeders in greenhouses and gardens and a few are predaceous. Some are capable of giving off an ill-smelling fluid that can kill small insects. They do not bite. Extreme weather conditions – such as heavy rains with flooding and extreme

changes in temperature – will sometimes force them inside the house. The use of weather stripping or flashing under doors provides an excellent barrier to home entry. Occasionally the use of a pyrethroid is necessary as a repellent around doorways to prevent their entry. Figure 9.

MILLIPEDES

