

Bugs and Blights of October

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Household nuisance insects. Snowbirds are packing for warmer climates and birds too are migrating south. Bugs are moving into warm sites for winter. These sites may be rotting logs, under bridges or your home. They do not breed in the walls and attic; but they hang out for the “big wait” till spring. Flies, some spiders, elm leaf beetles, boxelder bugs, seed bugs, lady beetles, root weevils, yellowjackets, paper wasps and rodents gain entry through openings around faucets, light fixtures and gaps in the house construction. On a sunny and warm fall day: the walls warm up and these refugees head out for a little exercise. For those in a log, warmth means outside the log where there is water, prey or nectar from the late blooming flowers. For those in the house walls, the greatest warmth is inside the house. They do not like it in your home any more than you do. They head for the light (nearest window to get out) but alas, the residents are upset and flailing around with all manner of devices from newspapers and fly swatters to electrified tennis rackets. Most bothersome are the big buzzy flies, circling in slow motion (and they are still hard to swat). If putting out bait for rodents, there may be more flies than usual. These shiny green or blue flies are your friend, disposing of the carcass, and reducing the rodent muscle to mulch and a pelt. “Friend” or not they are a nuisance. (Check **Pestsense** <http://pep.wsu.edu/pestsense/> for IPM ideas and homeowner pesticides registered for the specific pests of interest.



Fruit flies (vinegar flies) seem to proliferate exponentially in fall. There are many ways to dispatch them. Leave a wine bottle uncorked and you’ll soon see which type they prefer: something full bodied, with a fruity flavor and a good finish will do – as will some fruit juices, apple cider vinegar or a banana on the counter. Indeed a long-neck wine bottle makes a nice trap. Fly swatters are pretty useless against them but a portable vacuum is satisfying. Leave a banana peel out to concentrate their numbers. The fruit flies tend to land on corners and edges of cupboards and counters where they are little match for the vacuum. Of course locating the source (even the disposal, compost bucket or string mop can host a family or two) is most important. Fall is the time for emptying the garbage a bit more frequently. (Pestsense > nuisance pests > fruit flies)



Slugs will begin mating when the weather turns soggy and sappy, just the way they like it. Why not start your slug patrols and baiting **before** they lay the eggs of future generations. This entwined pair of gray garden slugs is mating on a cord of slime suspended from a branch above. Hortsense > common insects & mites > slugs for IPM and homeowner products, or the PNW Insect Management Handbook for home and commercial options <http://insects.ippc.orst.edu/pnw/insects>).

Late Blight (*Phytophthora infestans*) of tomatoes, peppers and potatoes was early this year, striking in early August in some gardens. This was the disease of the Irish potatoes famine. Look for leaf spots on potatoes and tomato and a dark glaze on the tomato fruit. Remove infected leaves at the first hint of the disease to keep it from spreading to the stem.

<http://cru.cahe.wsu.edu/CEPublications/eb0958/eb0958.html>

Cornell has an excellent publication with great photos on several hosts

http://www.longislandhort.cornell.edu/vegpath/photos/lateblight_tomato.htm

Bittersweet and other nightshades can also be a host as they are in the same plant family so be sure to remove the related weeds that can harbor the disease. Remember the disease triangle: for the disease to manifest itself there must be the pest, the host, and the environmental conditions conducive to the disease. To keep tomato, pepper and potato foliage dry, water in the morning, use drip or soaker hoses, or build a lean-to to protect from rain). PNW Plant Disease Handbook on line <http://plant-disease.ippc.orst.edu/ShowDisease.aspx?RecordID=1084> and http://www.extension.org/pages/18361/organic-management-of-late-blight-of-potato-and-tomato-phytophthora-infestans?utm_source=public_newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=may

For notices/events

October 26th, 2011. **Bugs and Blights Workshop**, WSU Snohomish County Extension
This workshop blends brief lecture with hands-on lab samples and short field walk. The focus for this month will be plant diseases such as white pine blister rust, apple anthracnose. Sharon Collman and Dave Pehling instructors. For more detail <http://snohomish.wsu.edu/calendar>