

Bugs & Blights

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Target the pest, protect the rest.



Spring exuberance

It begins: sun brings on the flowers and motivates gardeners; birds are building nests. Mated queen honeybees and bumblebees, and the solitary bees relatives are gathering nectar and pollen from flowers and in return for their pollination services the plants and we get fruit and vegetables. Rain brings on the fungi that attack soft new plant tissues, and the sun brings on the bugs – most good, some bad. Welcome spring.

Pesticide caution – pollinators

The exuberance of flowers also makes it necessary to be very specific in selecting and targeting pesticides to control insects, plant diseases, or weeds. Some pesticides are safer to use around bees than others. Protect bees and nesting birds. Watch out for blooms on target trees, but also blooming perennials and weeds nearby. Go to <https://pubs.wsu.edu/> In the search box, type “bee” and “poisoning”, select “How to Reduce Bee Poisoning from Pesticides” PNW591.



Bud growth stages - blueberries

For many fruit trees and berries, pesticide recommendations are listed by the stage of bud growth: “spray at green tip, pink or petal fall”. Whether conventional or organic, the application of a pesticide is useless unless timed to protect vulnerable plant parts before the spores can germinate and infect the plant tissues, or insects eat the leaves. Thanks to Tom Peerbolt, Peerbolt Crop Management Ag Consultant for the link to an illustrated guide to bud growth stages (for blueberries but applicable to other plants). http://blueberries.msu.edu/growing_blueberries/growth_stages_table

Shrubs and trees didn't bloom? Freeze damage to buds

An excellent, if a bit technical, description and illustration of how to evaluate bud damage after a freeze can be found at <http://intermountainfruit.org/html/cold-effects/cold-damage>

Tent Caterpillar – watch for tiny tents

Tent caterpillars hatch from eggs during warm spring days. Watch for the glint of white silk tents when the apple trees bloom. Eggs in colder locations, even in the same landscape or on the shady side of a tree, may be delayed in hatching when temperatures drop, then resume hatching when the weather warms again. This hatch - then wait - then hatch pattern may be repeated. Note when the first tents are visible, then wait for the second or third wave of new tents before applying any pesticides. Tents within reach can be pruned out or squashed by pinching, leaving the undamaged foliage to continue its work. A draft tent caterpillar publication is posted at <http://ext100.snohomish.wsu.edu/> Use the search function. Also, the PNW Insect Management Handbook provides life cycle, monitoring and IPM choices and registered pesticides to use if they are warranted. <http://pnwhandbooks.org/insect/hort> Select Common Insects and scroll down to Tent Caterpillars.



Red lily leaf beetle

On March 25th, 2013, the first emerging beetles were noticed on soil and new shoots of true lilies in south Bellevue, WA. The lilies were about 2” when the beetles and their first eggs were found on foliage, some were also on the soil. Todd Murray, WSU Skamania Co. Extension has posted a Pest Alert on WSU’s newly revamped gardening website <http://gardening.wsu.edu> under pests. Or it can also be printed from the WSU Publications website If found please notify collmans@wsu.edu to help document locations of this new invasive beetle. <http://cru.cahe.wsu.edu/CEPublications/FS084E/FS084E.pdf>

Photo Credit: Sharon Collman. Red Lily Leaf beetle, Todd Murray.