

Codling Moth and your backyard apple tree



Integrated Pest Management (IPM) for home orchards
Management strategies for home owners to safely and successfully grow worm-free apples and minimize the spread of these pests to commercial orchards.

Codling moth is a key pest to apple, crabapple and pear trees.

Washington homeowners must protect their fruit from two, sometimes three, invasions of codling moths (in May, July & late August) each year. The best means of protecting backyard fruit trees from codling moth is an IPM program utilizing several strategies.

Recognize the pest and fruit damage:



codling moth adult

The codling moth is 1/2 inch long. One female moth lays dozens of eggs on a tree that hatch into 'worms' looking for fruit to feed in and call home. Mature worms are 3/4" long and bore into the seedcore of fruit.



codling moth adult

If you grow apples; They will come! Codling moth or the "worm in the apple" directly impacts the eating quality of apples or pears here in Washington. If homeowners do not manage codling moth in their backyard trees, up to 80 to 95% of the fruit can become "wormy." In the apple-producing areas of WA State, homeowners are legally responsible (RCW 16.09) to control this pest in host trees on their properties.

Pesticide Strategies:

Once inside the apple, pesticides can't reach the worms. So pesticide sprays should start 10 days after petal fall and target the newly hatched worms before they bore in to the fruit. Reapply every 10-14 days until harvest. For a list of effective pesticides on codling moth, homeowners can contact their local WSU Extension office or access the WSU Hortsense website at <http://pep.wsu.edu/hortsense>

Non-chemical Strategies:

- Maintain apple tree height to 12 –15 feet (use dwarfing/semi-dwarfing rootstocks)
- Proper tree training and pruning to keep canopy open for pesticide & light penetration,
- Keep fruit bearing zone low so sprays can reach & cover fruit,
- Select early-maturing varieties of apples (avoid that third invasion of moths),
- Fruit scouting through growing season & disposal of any "wormy" fruit (do not

leave infested fruit on tree or on the ground under tree),

- Bagging fruit when fruit is less than 1" in diameter (use standard paper bags or special apple bags),
- Look for any outside codling moth sources and, if possible, remove infested trees (abandoned fruit trees, crabapple, large-fruited hawthorn & quince trees).

CONCLUSION: If you plant apples, pears or cherries in your backyard, the insects will come. Insect pest management necessitates multiple pesticide sprays or labor intensive strategies. Consider planting plums, peaches or apricots as these fruits can be grown in eastern Washington and do not have serious insect pests that infest the fruit.

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