

# Western Cherry Fruit Fly and your backyard cherry tree



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

**Western cherry fruit fly (WCFF) is the key pest of sweet, tart and ornamental cherries.**

The fly itself is not the problem, but the immature “maggot” found squirming within a ripe cherry is. If unmanaged, this pest can ruin every fruit on the tree, as well as the appetite of the most hearty person.



The WCFF is a threat to the Valley’s cherry industry as maggot-infested cherries are **not tolerated** by most local and export markets.

The adult fly is less than 1/4 inch long. One female fly can lay eggs just under the surface of dozens a cherries that hatch into maggots that tunnel and feed within the fruit. Once inside the cherry, pesticides can’t reach the maggots (5/16” long).



**“Oh, Yes! Fruit trees are beautiful at flower bloom and again at harvest. Just drive along any valley in Eastern Washington and enjoy the view. And nothing is more satisfying than supplying family and friends with the fruits of your labor. But please consider the following concerns before you plant a cherry tree.”**

## **Management:**

The WCFF is a pest of horticultural concern throughout the Yakima Valley. Property owners are legally responsible to maintain their trees free of this WCFF. The adult

**Top control strategy includes:**  
**Pesticide sprays targeting adult flies starting late May and continuing every 7 to 10 days until harvest.**

WCFF can be trapped on yellow sticky panels hung within the cherry tree. The yellow coloration attracts flies and the yellow adhesive on the panel’s surface traps them. Fly catches can be enhanced by the addition of ammonium carbonate lures. Note that this approach can reduce (but not eliminate) the abundance of adult flies in your tree.

Currently, there are several pesticide products that have either spinosad or malathion as an active ingredient and are labeled for use in backyard fruit trees. These insecticides target the adult cherry fruit fly and can be applied within seven days of the first fruit fly captured in a yellow sticky panel, or when red cherry varieties first show a straw-colored blush; this typically falls late May to early June.

Repeat pesticide applications every 7-10 days until cherry harvest. Be sure to check the pre-harvest interval of the pesticide formulation selected. Some spinosad products are considered organic.

There are spinosad products that are formulated as bait sprays that can be applied to backyard trees, but they are not readily available to homeowners at this time.

Some homeowners place tarps or landscape fabrics under their cherry trees from late May to early September to prevent mature maggots from penetrating into the soil to pupate. This approach together with the periodic collecting and disposing of infested cherries may reduce cherry fruit fly populations in your backyard tree.

Property owners who are unwilling to spray pesticides to control cherry fruit fly should consider removing their backyard cherry trees and replacing them with non-host trees.

## **CONTACT**

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