Don't let these insects bug you

Often we notice insects as soon as the daytime temperatures routinely reach 50 degrees or above.

On those early sunny days, the first insects we often notice are more of a nuisance than a problem, such as the multi-colored Asian lady beetle and flies, but there are others that may actually cause problems.

One of these potential problem insects is the Indian meal moth. This moth is rather plain and relatively small, and could be described as gray to beige in color with a dark strip on its wings.

Indian meal moths may emerge from old cereal-grain products that were stored in kitchen cabinets, pantries and closets. Other sources may be old rice for decorations and ceremonies, old bird feed, ornamental corn, or old pet food.

Sanitation is the best way to control and prevent this pest. Dispose of the infested food, regularly clean out storage areas, and periodically check for any new infestations. Insecticides should not be necessary with good sanitation practices.

Additional information may be found at https://extension.umd.edu/hgic/indian-mealmoth.

Other insects to be on the lookout for are termites and carpenter ants. When an existing termite colony gets a certain size, part of the group will leave to establish a new colony. This tends to happen on a warm spring day after a rain. Evidence of termites includes "pencil sized" mud tubes constructed on the surface of foundation walls, mud protruding from cracks between boards and beams, and hollow and rotting wood. If you suspect damage, the first thing to do is confirm if it is actually termites.

Once confirmed, take time to determine a course of action. Termites are a serious problem but their damage is a rather slow and gradual process.

If termites have been confirmed, most likely a professional exterminator will have to be used to control the pest. However, many suspected termite issues turn out to be carpenter ants.

Carpenter ants may resemble a new swarming infestation of termites, but identification may be made by looking at the wings and bodies. Both insects have two sets of wings.

Wings of a termite are all the same size. Front wings on the carpenter ant are noticeably larger than the hind pair. Also, carpenter ant wing tips are pointed, while termite wings tend to be paddle-shaped.

Termite wings break easily from the body but ant wings stay attached (often loose wings will be seen around a termite swarm).

However, body segments are the fastest way to tell the two insects apart. Ant bodies have three distinct segments, termites only have two.

Carpenter ants are not as potentially destructive as termites. They do not eat wood, but chew through it. Carpenter ants often attack areas of moist wool around water pipe areas.

Sawdust is often seen around areas damaged by carpenter ants since they do not eat wood. Like termites, a professional exterminator may be needed to remove the problem.

Additional information may be found on termites and carpenter ants at the following web locations: http://ohiowood.ohio-state.edu/images/Termite_Control.pdf and https://ohiodl.ohio-state.edu/factsheet/HYG-2063.

A new nuisance insect that you may see this spring or in future years is the brown marmorated stink bug. This insect has a "shield" shaped body that is characteristic of all stink bugs.

The adults are approximately five-eighths inch long with a mottled brownish grey color. The underside is white, sometimes with grey or black markings, and the legs are brown with faint white banding.

If this insect gets in your home, you can simply remove them or use a shop vacuum. The insect will smell and potentially stain fabric if smashed rather than physically removed from an area.

Caulking and sealing your home will greatly reduce the chance of infestation. Window air conditioners are a favorite point of entry, so make sure they are completely sealed around the unit.

For the homeowner, the brown marmorated stink bug is a nuisance but it has the potential to become a serious pest in the fruit industry. More information may be found at https://extension.psu.edu/brown-marmorated-stink-bug-for-this-pest.

All of us are looking forward to the warmer temperatures of spring, but along with these warmer temperatures there is the potential for some irritating and destructive insects.

However, by being diligent and observant, these insects will only be an inconvenience rather than a destructive pest.

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