

Warmer days bring out the insects, both good and bad. Although watching the bees come out for their first meals of the season is a highly anticipated spring activity, getting the first mosquito bite is not. There are few late-spring insects looking to tear up your trees and munch on your vegetables this time of year.

### **Bag worms**

May is the time for young bagworms to hatch and begin feeding on your trees and shrubs. These larvae are only 1/25 of an inch long. They will emerge and begin to spin their silken bags that they carry with them as they feed. These larvae generally feed on the plant they hatched onto but can be transported to other host plants by using a long silken thread to carry them like a kite.

As the larvae grow and feed on tree needles or leaf tissue their bag will become camouflage with this material. The bag can go unnoticed until it is 1-2 inches long. These bags will hang down like ornaments from your tree.

Although hand picking these bags (and destroying them) can be effective control any time of year, spraying is only effective when the larvae are young. Mid-May, start looking for their emergence. A few weeks after you notice the larvae, spray. This is generally mid to late June. Spinosad, acephate, cyfluthrin and permethrin are all effective for bagworm control. For thorough control, coverage of all foliage is as essential as the timing. August applications are a waste of time and money as the mature bagworms are tough and resilient against sprays.

### **Ash/Lilac Borer**

May is the time to be aware of and prevent damage from the ash/lilac borer. Ash/lilac borer, is different than the Emerald ash borer, but can still kill ash trees. Adults are active from late-April until June, although the extended cool period we experienced in April more than likely shifted initial activity into early to mid-May. Adults are brown, clearwing moths that resemble paper wasps. Adult females lay tan, oval-shaped eggs in cracks and crevices, or wounds at the base of plant stems. A single female can live about one week and lay up to 400 eggs.

The larvae of this borer damage trees and plants by feeding within the bark. This feeding restricts the flow of water and nutrients causing branch or shoot dieback. Feeding damage may appear as swollen areas or cracks where major branches attach to the trunk. You may also see light-colored sawdust accumulate at the base of the tree or shrub. Minimization of borer issues can be achieved by avoiding plant stress. Irrigate, fertilize, prune properly and mulch. Permethrin or bifenthrin are both effective against the borer. They can be applied to the bark at least six feet up from the base.

### **Asparagus Beetles**

Asparagus beetles, both adults and larvae, feed on asparagus spears by chewing on the tips. Asparagus beetles overwinter as adults in litter around the garden. Adults are blue/black beetles with a red prothorax with yellow spots. Larvae are a soft green grub. Eggs are small, elongated and black. You may notice them sticking out from the side of the spears.

As with many garden pests, early control is important to avoid later feeding damage. Sevin is effective for control but requires a one-day wait period before harvest. Products with permethrin are also effective but require a three-day wait period before you can harvest.

### **Cucumber Beetle**

Many homeowners have experienced cucumber or muskmelon vines that have suddenly turned brown and died. Often this is the result of a disease known as bacterial wilt. The cucumber beetle is the carrier for this disease. An infected plant cannot be cured so prevention is essential. Early control is also key for this overwintering beetle.

There are two types of cucumber beetles: striped and spotted. The striped cucumber beetle is the most common. Row covers, cones or any other mechanical barriers can be effective protection against the beetle. You must seal the edges to ensure that the beetles cannot get to the plants. As plants grow the covers will need to be removed to allow insect pollination. Insecticides should be applied before beetles are visible. Spray weekly throughout the season. Permethrin is effective against the cucumber beetle.

To avoid harming bees, spray pesticides in the evening, when they are less active. Always follow label instructions. For edible crops, look for the "post-harvest spray interval". This will tell you how long to wait after spraying pesticides until you can safely harvest your produce.