

PestGazette



Beware of Yellowjackets: *A Fall Nuisance and Health Threat*

As the days get shorter and the weather gets cooler, many species of yellowjacket queens stop laying eggs. New queens emerge, mate and find protected sites to hibernate over winter. Worker yellowjackets stop foraging for the colony and go out more often on their own. They are attracted to sweets or syrups, such as those left in the bottoms of soda cans. These and other sweet things in and around garbage cans or bags can draw dozens or even hundreds of these wasps. Since they no longer have a colony to provide for, these yellowjacket workers tend to “hang around” garbage cans, soft drinks or any other source of sweets they may find. Some become even more aggressive than they were before. They may try to protect

their new food sources, just like they used to protect their colony’s nest and that can lead to people being stung.

The first step in solving this problem is to thoroughly clean spills and place soda cans and similar items in tightly closed plastic bags. Wash all solid surfaces, dishes and serving utensils frequently. Keep all sweet foods, drinks and fruits covered until they are ready to be eaten.

If the problem continues, contact one of our pest management professionals for help. We can survey the situation, provide immediate knock-down treatments, if needed, advise on any sanitation improvements that will help, and treat garbage areas and containers with professional products. We’re waiting for your call.

Prevent Garden Pests, Reduce Over-watering



As people get ready to plant fall bulbs, we have already seen a summer of watering and enjoying our beautiful plants and shrubs. Areas that tend to attract pests are those which have sustained over-watering.

Some people use drip irrigation systems for their shrubs and flowers. These systems conserve water and focus use of water where the plants are. It is also a good system to use in drought times where softening the soil will help with late fall planting. However, care must be used not to over-water. Pests, such as soil insects, ants and termites, generally need water, food, and shelter. Interrupting any of these will put a strain on the pests and reduce the chances that they will become established and spend a good winter in the soil around structures.

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Furry Little Visitors

Every autumn, lots of creatures that enjoyed the warm summer outdoors try to come in to keep warm for the winter. They also help themselves to food in our pantry, like boxes or bags of cereal, nuts, cookies, or dry pet food. They may chew holes through walls and sometimes even electric wires. These little creatures can be a lot more than just a nuisance. Several wild rodents, which come into homes in the autumn or winter, spread strains of hantavirus which sometimes kill people. The biggest source of this virus is the very wide-spread, yet harmless-looking deer mouse. Other wild and domestic rodents can harbor and spread as many as 200 human diseases. In many urban and suburban settings, Norway rats may live outdoors in spring and summer, but come inside as the weather get cooler.

In warmer coastal and tropical areas, roof rats may live outside during wetter seasons and move inside during drier ones. They eat and contaminate our food and gnaw and mess up our homes with urine and droppings. They have been reported to interrupt our internet access and even start fires by chewing electric wires. More than 1/5 of the “fires of unknown origin” in the U.S. are probably caused by rodents gnawing matches or wiring.

You can help prevent these problems by:

- Thoroughly cleaning any spilled food, garbage, pet food, or grain which might attract rodents. Don't forget autumn decorations hung on doors or walls and don't leave food or water out in a pet's dish overnight.
- Clean up and remove all trash and rubbish, especially near your buildings. Keep all garbage in tightly-closed, metal cans and keep the cans and area around them clean.
- Be sure all outside doors, windows and vents fit snugly with no gaps and are kept closed, especially at night. A mouse needs only a 1/4-inch crack or hole to get inside. And a rat needs only a 1/2-inch hole to enter.
- Seal up any hole or crack in the outside of any building that is big enough for a rodent to enter. Pay special attention to places where wires, pipes or other utility lines enter a building.
- Keep plants and shrubs trimmed back at least 12 inches from the outer surface of any building. These can provide rodents food, shelter and an easy way up to higher entry points. Rodents climb very well.



Over-watering (continued from page 1)

Here are a few tips for you to avoid over-watering and reduce unwanted pests:

- 1** **Feel the soil.** If it is constantly soft and wet, you can reduce the water volume being used.
- 2** **Look for signs of small flies** in decaying soil and compost.
- 3** **Look for mosquitoes** that may be hovering near very moist soil.
- 4** **If you see signs of insects** as you transplant shrubs or put in bulbs, call a pest professional to identify what you have found.

Watering will ensure healthy growth and make fall planting easier, but over-watering will allow insects to gain a foothold. Keep a close watch and consult one of our technicians if you have questions about watering and maintaining a pest-free environment. ■

Bugs That Come in From the Cold

Ladybug

Ladybugs

About the time of the first frost, Ladybugs (Ladybird Beetles) can enter your home through any crack or crevice, under doors, and around screens. They come into hibernate until spring and cause problems when they are in great numbers. They cause no structural damage but they will become active when it gets warm again and try to find their way back outside, which can cause an unwanted hassle for homeowners.

Ladybugs may also become active during any unusually warm period during the winter. They will often fly towards windows or lights. Some kinds of Ladybugs, such as the Asian Ladybug, can come into a house literally by the tens of thousands. This can be very disturbing to people living in the home. Recent medical studies have proven these beetles can cause a true allergy or asthmatic reaction in some people. To prevent them before they enter in the fall, have our pest professional do a thorough inspection to give recommendations on possible exclusion measures and targeted treatment options.

Cluster Flies

One crisp fall morning, you open a window to let fresh air into your room. As you raise the window you see several hundred “dead” flies between the window and screen. While you’re looking at them, a few flies begin to move. They’re not dead! You slam the window shut, hoping none of them got into your house! What kind of flies are these and why are there so many? Also, why do they seem to be coming to life?

What you see are probably Cluster flies and they become pests of homes, schools, hospitals and commercial buildings throughout much of the United States. Cluster fly larvae parasitize (feed inside) a common species of earthworms during the summer. Nearing fall months, the last summer generations of adults emerge from the soil and look for a nice, warm place to hibernate, i.e. your attic, wall voids, or windowsills. These hardy little insects can travel more than a mile for a suitable hibernation site.

Cluster flies over winter and emerge from hibernation in the spring to breed and lay eggs on the soil surface near the earthworms which the young then infest. Over wintering cluster flies are the most troublesome because of their sheer numbers. Stimulated by warm weather, they can become active again during warm spells in winter, and again in early spring when they try to find openings to go back outside.

Bugs

Several plant-feeding true bugs sometimes come into houses in large numbers. These include the Boxelder Bug, the Western Conifer Seed Bug, and several different “stink bugs.” Infestations of these bugs are a direct result of their building up a large population on their host plants near the home they come into. Some of them will fly to outside lights at night and come in unnoticed when a door or window is opened the next morning.

Most of these are large enough to be noticed soon after they come inside. The best control measure for each of these over wintering pests is exclusion, by sealing up all cracks or other entry points, and possibly by applying a residual chemical barrier to deny access to exterior cracks or holes, which cannot be effectively closed.

If you notice lots of Cluster flies, Ladybugs, or other over wintering bugs in your home, call us and we’ll help you identify the pests, evaluate the problem and if it will help, apply an exterior perimeter treatment which should keep them out in the fall when they tend to look for likely spots to hibernate. In the meantime, you can sweep or vacuum these pests from the window or attic and dispose of them. If you use a vacuum, remember to remove the bag when you are finished, seal it in a plastic bag, and dispose of it with your normal trash or garbage. ■



Cluster fly



Boxelder bug



Fruit Flies

Small fruit flies, or vinegar flies, mainly members of the genus *Drosophila*, are attracted to ripe or decaying fruit. They lay their eggs in these materials and the larvae develop there. Adult flies are approximately 1/8 inch long, including their folded wings. Most species are dull tan to brown in color. They have red eyes and short, feathery antennae. One female may lay 300 to 500 eggs in her lifetime.

Long-term control strategies include sanitation and eliminating all suitable larval food source(s).

Call us if you need help controlling these or other pests in your home. ■

Hidden Dangers in Your Garden

Keep Your Pets Safe from Toxic Plants

Be careful when you're letting your pet "smell the roses." Some common plants are toxic to most animals, according to the American Animal Hospital Association, a Denver-based professional organization for veterinarians. The organization suggests keeping your pets away from several plants, including azaleas, poinsettias, hydrangeas, and more. ■



Avocado: Fatal to birds, this plant's leaves, seeds stems and skin are considered a cardiovascular toxin. It can also cause kidney or organ failure. *(not pictured)*



Azalea: A lovely bush filled with flowers. Yet, it's a cardiovascular, gastrointestinal and neurological toxin for animals.



Begonia: A pretty flower to people, but potentially fatal to pets. Can cause kidney or organ failure.



Foxglove (Digitalis): One of its nicknames — Dead Men's Bells — is a clue that this bell-shaped, tubular flower can be fatal.



Hydrangea: A hardy, showy, shade-loving flower, this plant contains cyanide.



Jack-in-the-pulpit: Usually found in the woods, this flowering plant can cause kidney or organ failure. *(not pictured)*



Lily of the valley: Known for sweet-smelling flowers, yet potentially fatal to pets.



Oleander: It's pastel flowers make it a popular bush, yet it's very poisonous and can be fatal to pets.



Poinsettia: The famous Christmas plant can bring on dermatitis in animals. It's also a gastrointestinal toxin.

Rhubarb leaves: Can cause kidney or organ failure in animals. *(not pictured)*