

The Spinneret

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Spring 2015



Well, Mother Nature went easy on the April showers, but the May flowers were prolific. A warm dry spring promises a busy summer for pests.

Looks like the weather man is promising a long warm summer too. So I'll be sure to rack up some mileage on the motorcycle with the boss. Guess I'd better get a bigger bottle of bug remover for the visor. - Ed. ■

Strawberry Root Weevil

As summer returns you may encounter some strange creatures inside that maybe you haven't seen before.

Some of them may be root weevils.

Root weevils are typically less than 1/4 inch long and appear fat or rounded.

They are often confused with beetles because of their dark, hard shells but their distinctly bent antenna give them away. The elbow on the antenna make their head look like a trident or pitchfork.



Kristian Peters CC-BY-SA 3.0

Strawberry Root Weevil

Root weevils lay their eggs in the spring right on the soil surface or in leaf litter. When they hatch, the larvae burrow down to the plant roots and start feeding. They will feed all summer and will spend the winter underground until they emerge as adults in spring. Adults from the previous year will join them.

Despite its name the root weevil doesn't just feed on roots. The larva or grub stage feeds on roots. The adult feeds on leaves.

Root weevils are general feeders and even though some carry names like "strawberry root weevil". They will feed on other plants like rhododendron, spruce, mint and they have even been found feeding on grass.

There are several factors that can cause root weevils to enter a home.

As winter approaches they may move inside to winter over. Even if you don't see them inside during the fall, you may see them in late spring or early summer as they try to find their way back outside. They don't always remember which way to go.

Applications of fertilizer or pesticides to the lawn can drive them inside.

Extended dry periods can also get them moving.

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Honey Do:



You know, even with the latest generations of masonry siding like "Hardy" you still have to paint almost as often as with wood.

Most of these siding products have a certain amount of wood in them and they will sprout mushrooms and decay if not kept watertight.

More importantly, most contractors use wood to trim corners, windows and door frames.

These tend to fail first allowing rot to get started behind the siding.

Check trim for rot and inspect caulk and paint for cracks.

Many siding manufacturers will void their warranties if this envelope is allowed to fail. ■

Puncture weed

For most of us, going to the beach means kicking off our shoes and running around barefoot. But as anyone who's had to pull thorns out of a kids foot or a dogs paw can attest, one encounter with puncture weed will make you think twice about taking your sandals off.



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Puncture weed.

Puncture weed is a pioneer plant that commonly inhabits roadsides, gravel driveways and, to different degrees, lawns. It is able to survive in arid, compact soils by extending a cluster of fine roots into the soil in addition to a tap root allowing it better access to water.

This is a low lying perennial plant that seldom rises more than an inch or two high. It grows in mats of slender vines that radiate outward from a tap root. Pointed leaves cover the vines and when in bloom tiny yellow flowers dot the vines.

Puncture weed produces copious amounts of seed pods sometimes described as "goat heads".

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Strawberry Root Weevil

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Root weevils can't fly so when they do enter a home it is from near the foundation. Strangely enough, that's where we usually put our flower beds.

They can devastate commercial crops and nurseries but they seldom do significant damage to gardens.

As with many garden variety pests, the best way to prevent getting them inside is to keep plant beds away from the foundation.

A dry zone of stone or pea gravel can make it more difficult for adults to find a suitable place to lay eggs.

Removing leaf litter from under shrubs also helps.

Adults spend the day under ground. Keeping shrubs trimmed up from the ground will make it more difficult for adults to access the leaves to feed.

Pesticide applications are not generally needed or recommended. Most over the counter products are not effective and those that are, are best applied late at night to kill the adults while they feed. ■

Shop Talk

New Faces:

Barbara McDowell joins our team here at BEACON Pest Control as Office / Service Manager.

Barbara is a graduate of Western Washington University with a degree in communications.

You may recognize her from her previous employment in home finance or last winters disaster response.

She is an avid bird watcher and has traveled to Africa and Central America in pursuit of her hobby.



Barbara McDowell

Hey!

We really hate loosing touch with you. With cell phones becoming our only phones many of you have turned off your land lines.

If you haven't updated your account we may not have that cell number.

Call us and we can update that for you or you can use your online account to update your contact info.

Haven't set up your online account? Call and we can help you with that too! ■

Puncture weed

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Each pod contains several seeds that can lie dormant in the soil for up to 7 years.

Pods are adorned with 1-4 spikey thorns tough enough to penetrate rubber tires. Many a cyclist has been turned into a pedestrian after riding through a patch.

Though not native to North America is so common that it is found throughout most of the country.

It is a particular nuisance to ranchers and farmers because the thorny seeds get stuck in the animals hide and they can become ill from toxins in the plant when eaten.

For pet owners, walking the dog can turn into carrying the dog if they stumble into them. In areas where these plants are common it may be advisable to put shoes on the dog. There are several companies making shoes to fit most breeds.

Apparently, there is some belief that preparations of this plant can enhance male performance. While thousands of dollars are spent every year there is no scientific confirmation of its effectiveness.

On bare ground, products containing glyphosate (RoundUp) do a good job of killing this plant.

With your lawn, keeping it healthy helps crowd out this plant. Avoid mowing it so short that sunlight can reach the roots. This helps "shade out" the new seeds making it harder for them to germinate.

On small areas physical removal in early spring can be very effective however once established in a lawn you may need to treat with a product containing 2,4-D to knock it out without killing the grass.

Several brands of lawn product contain an ingredient called pendimethalin. This is a growth inhibitor that helps prevent new plants from getting established. Only apply this to bare ground or lawns if you don't intend to over seed because it will also inhibit the new grass.

If you do resort to applying weed control products always follow the label carefully. If you have any questions about their application you can get expert advise from your local county agriculture extension office. ■

Service Targets:

This years bare ground services for driveways has been a resounding success thanks to a hand from Mother Nature. Warm weather and scattered showers make the products work better.

At this point, if you have new growth be sure to call and a technician will be dispatched promptly.

Ants and spiders are our primary targets thru July. Technicians are on the look out for wasp nests but if you encounter one call us promptly. And as always if you encounter little black ants raiding the kitchen please, don't spray them, call us immediately and we will come take care of them. ■



Steve Hurst / USDA-NRCS

Seed pods.