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Virginia Cooperative Extension



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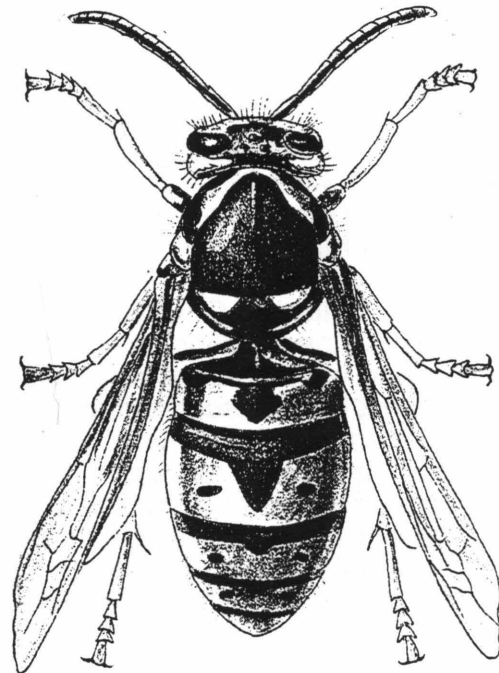
STINGING INSECTS IN THE FALL

INSECT NOTES

There are a variety of insects that can "sting" (with a stinger or with irritating hairs), and many of them are common at this time of the year--in the fall. Probably the most common are yellowjackets and other social and solitary wasps, but also present during the late summer and fall are wheel bugs and several kinds of stinging caterpillars. The wasps can be found almost anywhere, the wheel bugs and caterpillars are often found associated with gardens.

Yellowjackets -- The nests/colony size of yellowjackets is at a peak this time of year. There are large number of workers foraging for food, and the food supply is beginning to diminish! Yellowjackets become a pest in the fall when their normal food supply of caterpillars and other insects becomes scarce and the workers begin visiting garbage cans, fruit trees (for the fallen fruit), and picnics to supplement their diet! They can forage a considerable distance from their nest, so it is difficult to accomplish any significant control.

Although the workers are not especially aggressive at this time, they will often fly directly onto food, and their presence can cause some alarm to people sensitive to stings. Keep trash cans well covered, fruit picked up, and any other source of food (especially sweets) covered. Nests located close to the activity of people or pets can be eliminated with commercial wasp control aerosol sprays. Follow the directions on the can, and do it at night when it is cool and all the wasps are in the nest. Resist the "burn 'em out with a torch" method!

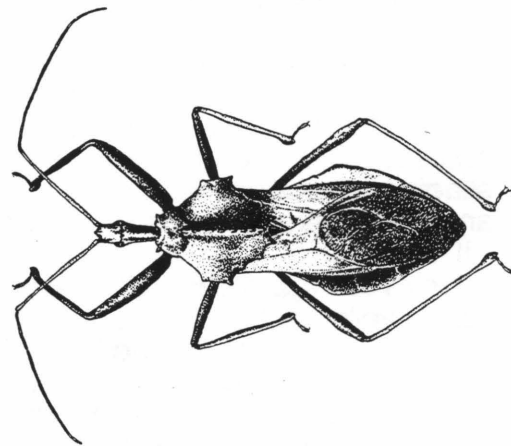


Wasps -- The most common wasp this time of year is the umbrella wasp. These brown, slender waisted wasps build nests that do not have a cover and usually hang upside down under eaves and windows. They can be fairly aggressive at any time, but can seem extra "pushy" at this time because there are many workers associated with the nest. At this time of year, the colony has the greatest number of workers--and the available food supply (usually other insects) is on the decline (just like yellowjackets).



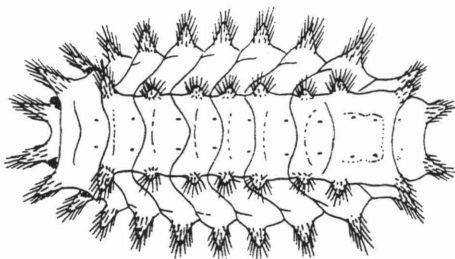
The nests of umbrella wasps are easily controlled with commercial aerosols. It is best to do it at night when all the wasps are in the nest--wear some protection. The actual nest can be removed the next day--or just leave it alone.

Wheel Bugs -- These insects have piercing mouthparts and can deliver a severe bite to the unsuspecting person that handles them. They are often found associate with vegetable and flower gardens, where they can find other insects to attack and feed on during their development and in the adult stage. These insects grow slowly during the summer, and do not become adults until fall (but they can bite you as immatures!). They don't seek to bite people, but will if they are picked up or brushed against.

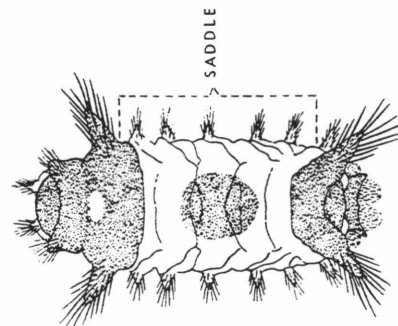


The wheel bug has a characteristic shape. The "wheel" (what looks like part of a wheel with spokes) is located on the region just behind the head. When they are encountered just leave them alone--let them continue to feed on the insects found in the garden! They may do some good.

Stinging Caterpillars -- There are several kinds of caterpillars that can deliver a nasty "sting" when they are handled. They are usually found in and around vegetable gardens and flower gardens, and many times people brush up against these insects without realizing it--until they get the itching reaction! Small children are often "stung" by these caterpillars because they may be attracted to them, and pick them up. The sting results from some special hairs located on the body of the caterpillar. These hairs are sharp enough to penetrate the skin, then break off to release some irritating fluid. The reaction is an itching/burning feeling for about 2 hours. There is nothing long lasting about the exposure, and some people will react more intensely than others.

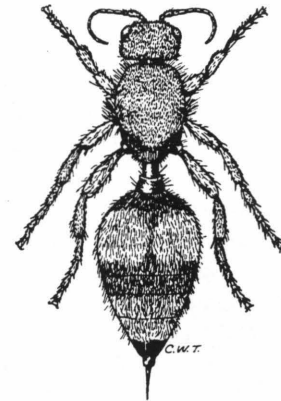


A SLUG CATERPILLAR
Euclea chloris



SADDLEBACK CATERPILLAR
Sibine stimulae

Velvet Ant -- These insects are not really ants, but certainly look like ants. They can deliver a sting if handled. They are parasites in the nests of bees and usually appear in late summer and fall crawling on the ground. Because they are often brightly colored red and black, children may pick them up--then get stung. The sting is no more intense than a fair-sized yellowjacket, but painful nevertheless! Just leave these critters alone, look but don't touch.



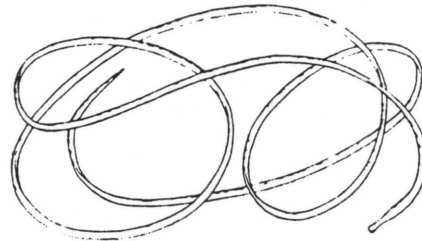
YELLOW ANTS

Colonies of yellow ants often swarm during the warm days of late summer and fall. There are just a few ant species that swarm during this time of year, and colonies of the larger and smaller yellow ant are the most common. These ants are commonly found around houses, under sidewalks and adjacent to foundations. The swarming activity can last for a day or so--and produce thousands of small to medium-sized, light brown (yellow!) ants! The nests are usually easily located and destroyed with garden insecticides (use liquids to treat the soil).

WHAT'S COMING IN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS

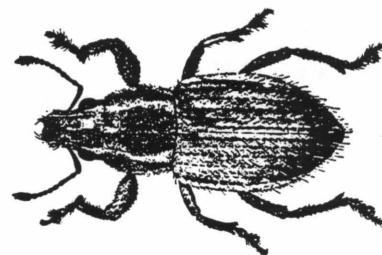
Horsehair worms --

Homeowners/pet owners often encounter horsehair worms in their pet's food or water dish this time of year. Usually causes a panic--they figure their cat or dog got some sort of parasite! Well, the truth is that these worms are parasites of crickets and grasshoppers--not pets. They complete their development inside the cricket during the late summer and exit the host. The exit usually occurs when the parasitized insect lands in a water dish or a small pool of water. Certainly, there is no need for control of these critters.



Wood roaches -- Adults of these cockroaches will be flying to lights at night in the next few weeks. They normally live outdoors under the bark of dead trees and logs. But in the fall the males will be attracted to outdoor lights, and may end up indoors. These cockroaches do not infest houses, so there is no need for control.

Weevils -- A few species of weevils can become common indoors this time of year. The most common is the Asiatic Oak Weevil, but there are a few other species. They don't infest houses, and actually do not damage indoors--except walk slowly up the walls or on the floor (drivin' some folks plum crazy). Rarely



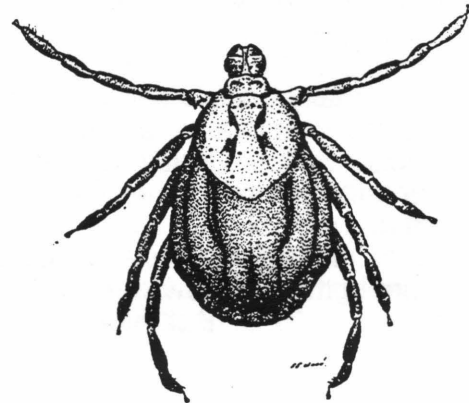
do they become numerous enough to require control measures. They don't bite or sting, and most can't even fly--so they can be picked up and tossed out the door (okay, you can squash 'em if you want).

Cluster flies -- Not a pest yet, but soon to be! Now is the time to apply control measures for these flies--yes, now. Although they don't make their presence known until winter--buzzing around the windows and lamps--they enter house attics and wall spaces at this time of the year. The maggot stages of these flies feed on earthworms, and there can be a couple of generations per year (summer). In the fall the adults look for winter shelter--and they start early! The best control is to treat the outside of the house with insecticide at this time of the year, so that the adult flies will contact the residue when they are crawling into cracks and small openings to gain access to the attic or wall voids. This method is a first step in cluster fly control! And it may have to be repeated--as most insecticide residues do not remain long or effective on surfaces exposed to the sun and rain. Remaining steps include treating the attic space with an aerosol to kill some of the adults that have made it through the chemical barrier.

Fruit flies -- Attracted to the ripe tomatoes, apples, peaches, and pears are the ever numerous fruit flies! These small, red-eyed flies seem to find a piece of fermenting fruit no matter where it is, and they are small enough to get into the house in large numbers. There is little control that can be done for these flies--just try to keep fruit protected, and toss out the rotten stuff so it won't attract flies. If you are canning tomatoes--just give up! Fruit flies can smell this stuff for miles!

House flies -- Their numbers have been increasing all summer--during the hot weather. They are doing well outdoors now, but as soon as the weather begins to cool, these flies will be attracted to indoor environments. Schools and food service facilities are often hard hit by house flies in the fall; there may be garbage containers close to doors and screens that are not covering windows very well. A first step is to move the garbage as far from the door as possible, get it covered (and keep it covered), and make sure the doors are kept closed.

Ticks -- Ticks continue to be a problem in the fall. This is the season for "seed ticks"--the small stage that hatches from the eggs laid in late summer. Seed ticks can infest houses by being introduced by female ticks that have come indoors with the family pet. It is always a good idea to inspect the house cat or dog that has been outdoors during the summer, but is now coming indoors to escape the cool nights. Make sure they are not bringing in ticks!



ANNUAL PEST CONTROL CONFERENCE

The annual Pest Control Conference (for professional pest control operators) will be held Oct. 11th and 12th in Hampton. If there are operators in your area that have not received the registration material, have them call us (703/231-4045) and we will send it out. The Conference will provide recertification credits for Category 7A and 7B.