Texas Agricultural Extension Service

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BRUSH COUNTRY HORTICULTURE

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PECAN PEST ALERT

Two insect pest were rather damaging to last year's pecan crop: hickory shuckworm and leaf-footed plant bug (stinkbug). The larvae of shuckworm tunnel extensively through the pecan shuck, resulting in blackened shucks that often adhere to the shell. Of more concern is the fact that shuckworm-damaged nuts do not fill, usually being devoid of any pecan kernel.

Leaf -footed bug damage, by contrast, is one or more black spots on the pecan kernel; the spots are about a quarter-inch in diameter and the meat beneath the spots is quite bitter.

Both the newly-revised Homeowner's Fruit and Nut Spray Schedule and the commercial spray guide indicate that these two pests should be controlled in August—which is too late for much of the Brush country. Damage commences so on after mid-July in the Valley, progressively later as you move north.

The time to control shuckworm and stink bug damage is when hardening of the pecan shell has progressed halfway down its length (shell hardening starts on one end of the nut). Consequently, start splitting nuts to check for half-shell hardening about July 20 at Weslaco, about July 25 at Corpus Christi.

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Professor & Extension Horticulturist

NUT DROP-CASEBEARER -----

If you've noted a number of dropped nutlets under pecan trees in the last week, chalk it up to damage caused by the second generation of the pecan nut casebearer. The dropped nutlets will have an accumulation of frass at the basal end, which covers the entry hole of the casebearer larva.

Second generation casebearer damage started just about mid-June at Weslaco and progressively later as you move north. Usually, it comes 42 to 45 days after the first generation. Too, it always seems that if first generation damage is light, the second generation will be serious. Such is the case here, since we couldn't detect enough activity in the first generation to spray—and second generation damage is extensive in those orchards.

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WATER CONSERVATION -----

Rains in late June over much of the Brush Country have brought temporary relief from the drought, but conservation measures are still necessary because the drought is by no means broken. This is especially true in those counties whose water comes from the Rio Grande River—many of which did not receive much rainfall.

Large, established shade trees can go a long time without irrigation or rainfall because of their extensive root system. Established perennials such as shrubs and turfgrass will also go longer than you might think.

Turfgrass is a good indicator of the need for water in the home landscape: it will start to turn sort of grayish green in mid-afternoon as the result of water stress. Thus, landscape watering of established plants should be delayed until the grass starts to show the grayish-green color—then water slowly and for a long time to soak the soil deeply.

Obviously, sprinkler irrigation should be carried out from evening through very early morning to minimize evaporation losses. Also, hard-to-water areas should be watered with a soaker hose, possibly set upside down to minimize runoff. In all cases, prevent water from running onto walks, driveways, walls and the street, as such water is mostly, if not all, wasted.

I've said this many times over the last several years, and it is still true: established fruit trees, other trees, shrubs and turf can readily go two to three or more weeks without rain or irrigation if you water thoroughly and deeply when you do water. For example, citrus growers in the Valley flood irrigate their orchards about every three to four weeks during the summer—but they apply about five inches of water each time.

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PEACH LEAF RUST -----

Peach trees in areas of the Brush Country which haven't gotten significant rainfall are probably not much affected by peach leaf rust as yet, whereas those growing in areas of recent rainfall are ripe for infection. For commercial growers, Bravo® is the recommended fungicide; homeowners have a fruit-tree spray with the same active ingredient as Bravo® (chlorothalonil).

Peach leaf rust appears as small yellow spots on the leaf—a closer look shows a rust-colored fruiting body. The freckle-sized yellow spots ultimately cause extensive leaf chlorosis and defoliation. Prevention of infections on the newer leaves is the only recourse to reduce the severity of this disease.

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MOSQUITOES -----

Everyone that received rain in the last week and a half should be braced for mosquitoes, particularly the tree hole/artificial container type mosquitoes. These are mosquitoes that lay eggs and develop inside small containers, tree holes and other areas that will hold water after a rain. They develop rapidly, emerge, mate, feed and lay eggs on the inside wall of containers at or above the waters surface. The eggs do not hatch until they are submerged (this happens when sufficient rain occurs). Once submerged the eggs hatch and larvae develop to adults in about a week (give or take a few days). Thus, about a week after a good rain, you can expect problems with mosquitoes. As a reminder, the two species that transmit Dengue are tree hole breeders.

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Associate Professor & Extension Entomologist

BUG ZAPPERS -----

Since mosquitoes are likely to be a problem soon, I thought I would pass on some information sent by Dr. Mike Merchant (TAEX-Dallas) which he got from Colorado State's Pest Alert newsletter. A recent article in Entomological News looked into what was being killed by bug zappers in the Newark, DE area. The abstract of the article is as follows: "Our survey of insects electrocuted during routine use of electric insect traps revealed only 31 biting flies, a minute proportion (0.22%) of the 13,789 total insects counted. In contrast, species from 12 orders and more than 104 nontarget insect families, including 1,868 predators and parasites (13.5%) and 6,670 non-biting aquatic insects (48.4%) were destroyed. The heavy toll on nontarget insects and the near absence of biting flies in catches suggests that electric insect traps are worthless for biting fly reduction - and probably are counterproductive - to homeowners and other consumers."

Stormy Sparks

Associate Professor & Extension Entomologist

IPM COORDINATORS IN SCHOOLS -----

I got a question recently concerning CEU's for an IPM Coordinator. There is no mandated recertification or continuing education process for IPM coordinators; they do not have to get CEU's. Structural Pest Control Board Regs only require a one-time 6-hour training within a year from the time of being appointed IPM coordinator. However, some coordinators also make recommendations, applications, etc. and have the job of a noncommercial pesticide applicator, which does require CEU's. The SPCB issues a periodic list of course providers. NOTE: each county should have received (in the past 6 months or so) a copy of the booklet **PEST CONTROL IN TEXAS SCHOOLS: Adopting Integrated Pest Management.** If you did not get a copy, contact Don Renchie (409-845-3849). Copies are available to the public for $10.00 per copy.

Stormy Sparks
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NESTING WASPS -----

Wasps nest are becoming more apparent as summer continues. These nest have likely been developing for some time. Wasp nests are started each spring by a single fertilized queen (the only sex/stage that overwinters). The queen starts a nest from scratch and it remains small until she has reared additional adults to help in building, foraging, rearing young and defense of the nest. As she rears more and more offspring the nest grows larger and larger.

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