

Kansas Insect Newsletter

For Agribusinesses, Applicators, Consultants and Extension Personnel



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October 22, 2010 No. 29

Put Out The Welcome Mat: Here Comes The Asian Lady Beetle!

This is the time of year when the Asian lady beetle, *Harmonia axyridis* adults start entering homes and becoming a nuisance. The Asian lady beetle is a native of Asia and was introduced into the southeastern and southwestern portions of USA to deal with aphids on pecan trees. However, it spread rapidly to other portions of the USA. It is a tree-dwelling lady beetle, more so than the native species of lady beetles, and a very efficient predator of aphids and scales.

During fall and early winter, when the weather is cooler, Asian lady beetle adults start congregating on the south side of buildings and entering homes. The beetle does this because in their homeland of China they inhabit tall cliffs to overwinter. There are very few “tall cliffs” in Kansas—so the next best thing is a building.

The Asian lady beetle can be easily distinguished from other species of lady beetles by the presence of a pair of white, oval markings directly behind the head, which forms a black M-shaped pattern. Adults are 1/4 inch long, 3/16 inch wide and yellow to dark-orange colored. In addition, their body is usually covered with 19 black spots. Adults can live up to 3 years. Female beetles lay yellow, oval-shaped eggs in clusters on the underside of leaves. The eggs hatch into larvae that are red-orange and black in color, and shaped like a miniature alligator. The larvae are primarily found on plants feeding on soft-bodied insects such as aphids and scales. They eventually enter a pupal stage. Pupae can be seen attached to plant leaves. The adults emerge from the pupae and start feeding on aphids. Adults can be found on a wide-variety of trees including apple, maple, oak, pine, and poplar; and there may be multiple generations per year depending on the populations of aphids present in soybean fields.

Asian lady beetle adults are a nuisance pest because they tend to congregate and overwinter inside buildings in large numbers. The beetles release a pheromone that attracts more beetles to the same area. Although the beetles may bite, they do not physically harm humans nor can they breed or reproduce indoors. Beetles are attracted to lights and light-colored buildings, especially the south side where it is warm. They then work their way into buildings through cracks and crevices. Dark-colored buildings generally have fewer problems with beetles (so now is the time to paint your house). Adult beetles will feed on ripening fruit such as peaches, apples, and grapes creating shallow holes in the fruit. Large numbers of beetles feeding on fruit may cause substantial damage so that the fruit is less appealing for consumption.

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Beetles may be prevented from entering homes by caulking or sealing cracks and crevices. Beetles already in homes can be physically removed by sweeping them or vacuuming. Be sure to thoroughly empty the vacuum bags afterward. Do not kill the beetles. Just release them outdoors underneath a shrub or tree away from the house. Commercially available indoor light traps can be used to deal with beetles indoors. The traps need to be placed near the center of a room and they are only effective at night in the absence of competing light. In addition, they work best when room temperatures are 75°F or higher.

If crushed, the beetles will emit a foul odor and leave a stain. The dust produced from an accumulation of dead Asian lady beetle adults behind wall voids may incite allergies or asthma in people. Although there are some sprays available, the use of insecticides is not recommended for indoors.

Homeowners that want to avoid dealing with overwintering beetles entering their homes can hire a pest management professional to treat the points of entry on the building exterior with a pyrethroid insecticide. The treatments need to be made in late September or early October before the beetles enter the building to overwinter. Beetles that are feeding on fruit can be “controlled” with insecticides commonly labeled for use on fruit trees.



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Raymond Cloyd

Hackberry Psyllids Abundant

Over the past few weeks many homeowners have expressed concern about numerous tiny ‘flies’ or ‘gnats’ crawling all over screens, decks, and sides of homes. In many cases these are not really flies but tiny plant lice that infest hackberry trees. Hackberry psyllids resemble mini cicadas, are only 1/6 inch long, and are a dull brown/grayish color (see photo). The adults overwinter in the bark of hackberry trees and other protected areas and become active in the spring, mating and laying eggs on new hackberry leaf tissue. The immatures (nymphs) begin feeding on leaf tissue, stimulating abnormal growths that are commonly called nipple galls (see photo). Just before the last molt, typically in late-September, these nymphs emerge from the galls and quickly molt into adults. They usually emerge in large groups, in the hundreds and thousands, and cluster on windows, screens, automobiles, etc. (see photo). Although this can be a real nuisance for homeowners, hackberry psyllids do not bite, sting, vector disease, or damage structures or household goods. These infestations are short-lived and once temperatures drop below 40°F, adults will go into hibernation. Until then, homeowners can help minimize the irritation of these insects in several ways. Keeping porch and indoor lights off as much as possible may help reduce the psyllids attraction to screens, doors, etc. For insects that make it into the home vacuuming along screens and other areas with high concentrations of insects works well, especially using a wand extension.

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Holly Davis

Report from the Kansas State University Insect Diagnostic Laboratory:

The following samples were submitted to the Insect Diagnostic Laboratory from October 8th to October 21st.

- October 8 2010 – Labette County – Fruit flies in home
- October 8 2010 – Johnson County – Eastern yellow jacket
- October 11 2010 – Miami County – Ichneumonid wasp around home
- October 11 2010 – Pratt County – Tangle web spider in home
- October 12 2010 – Osborne County – Pigeon Tremex around trees
- October 13 2010 – Edwards County – Achemon sphinx moth
- October 13 2010 – Riley County – Boxelder bugs around garage
- October 14 2010 – Sherman County – Codling moth damage on apples

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October 14 2010 – Reno County – Soldier fly larva in garage
October 14 2010 – Riley County – Grass spider and broad-faced sac spider in home
October 14 2010 – Reno County – Blow fly pupae in home
October 14 2010 – Riley County – Sphinx moth caterpillar in spider web
October 15 2010 – Lyon County – Louse from hair sample
October 15 2010 – Johnson County – Springtails, red-legged ground beetle, ground spider, camel cricket, and black carpenter ant from home
October 18 2010 – Grant County – Dusky sap beetles on corn ears in field
October 18 2010 – Johnson County – Fuzzy oak galls on Pin oak
October 19 2010 – Jackson County – Katydid eggs and webworm damage on Pawpaw trees
October 19 2010 – Riley County – Cat fleas
October 19 2010 – Ellsworth County – Drugstore beetles in home
October 19 2010 – Nemaha County – Brown recluse spider in home

If there are any questions regarding these samples or about the identification of any arthropod please contact the Insect Diagnostician at (785) 532-4739 or GotBugs@ksu.edu.

Holly Davis

Sincerely,

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