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Abundance of Hackberry Gall Nipple Makers

Many residents that live in neighborhoods with hackberry trees have been noticing many small cicada looking insects, about 3/16 inches in length with spotted wings on their window screens and doors. These insects are adult hackberry gall psyllids or also called hackberry nipple gall makers. In the fall, these insects invade indoors looking for an overwintering site. Normally, they will overwinter under the bark of trees, but will also come indoors through any cracks and crevices such as around windows and doors usually at night since they are attracted to indoor lights. However, those that come inside are going to die.

In the spring, the adult psyllids will emerge and lay eggs in the leaves of hackberry trees. When the egg hatches, the developing psyllid begins feeding and the leaf begins to form a small pocket around the psyllid as the insect develops, forming a gall. The galls that are produced vary in size from 1/8 to 1/4 inch and are found on the leaves and petioles. The adult gall will then emerge in the fall. Even though the galls can be unsightly on the leaves and sometimes cause premature leaf drop, they do not appear to affect tree health. This means no chemical treatments are recommended.

Hackberry psyllids are not harmful to people or pets and will not attack indoor plants or furnishings. Since they are a seasonal annoyance, residents can vacuum them to remove them as needed. As the temperatures fall, so will the hackberry gall psyllid population!



Photo of hackberry gall psyllids, *Pachypsylla* sp. (Homoptera: Psyllidae), adults. Photo by C.L. Cole, Texas A&M University.

Invasion of Squash Vine Borers

Squash vine borers are the most common and most damaging pests of squash. The larvae are borers so they will cause damage as they tunnel into the stems. They usually feed on squash and related wild plants but also can feed on melons and cucumbers.

The adult moths resemble a wasp, with a red abdomen surrounded with black bands at each segment; their front wings are covered with metallic brown scales and their back wings are clear with a brown band. Adult females lay eggs on the leaves and stems of primarily squash. The larvae hatch and begin burrowing into host plant stems. The larva is white in color with a brown head and grows to be an inch in length. The larvae will produce sawdust like frass near the base of the plant which may cause the stems to wilt and die. The larvae then climb from the stems to pupate in the soil.

Some Control Suggestions:

Some Non-Chemical Controls:

Keep natural enemies in the garden such as parasitic wasps that will attack squash vine borer eggs and larvae. Also adult ground beetles (Family Carabidae) will attack squash vine borer larvae. Split vines should be covered with soil immediately after the larvae have been removed. Also remove vines soon after harvest to destroy any larvae still inside stems.

Some Chemical Controls:

Some chemical suggestions include such active ingredients as pyrethrins, permethrin, or carbaryl. Apply the chemicals to the base of the plant, underneath the foliage and underneath the stems of the plant.



Southwestern squash vine borer, *Melittia calabaza* (Lepidoptera: Sesiidae), adult. Photo by G. McIlveen, Jr, <http://insects.tamu.edu/images/insects/common/images/cd-43-c-txt/cimg251.html>.

Aggregating Lady Beetles

The multi-colored Asian ladybeetle is an introduced insect from Asia that have established themselves in many areas of the U.S., where they reduce populations of aphids and scale insects. However, this lady beetle likes to congregate in large numbers around buildings when they overwinter. This causes them to sometimes move indoors in the cooler months. They will exude a yellowish liquid when disturbed (reflux bleeding), which can stain fabric and can cause skin irritation. They can also bite since they have chewing mouthparts.

Exclusion practices should be used to prevent these ladybeetles from entering into buildings. All cracks and crevices, such as around windows, doors, air conditioners, and utility pipes should be sealed in late summer and fall. Also if beetles are spotted inside the home, then a vacuum should be used to remove them. Remember to dispose of the vacuum bag outside, so the beetles do not escape and re-invade the building.



Multi-colored Asian Ladybeetle. Photo by Mike Merchant, Professor and Extension Entomologist, Texas A&M University.

Be Aware of Chilli Thrips

Chilli thrips, *Scirtothrips dorsalis* (Hood), have been detected in 8 counties across Texas. However, they are believed to be in other counties but have not been identified documented so far. The adult thrips are extremely small, 2 mm in length, pale with dark wings. The immature chilli thrips are also pale in color. Since these thrips are smaller than western flower thrips, we usually do not notice them but we can detect their presence by their damage. They are foliage feeders, causing the leaves to brown and curl. This may cause the leaves to detach from the stem at the petioles. Their feeding may also cause the buds to become brittle and drop. Chilli thrips tend to prefer new growth, so young leaves, buds and fruits are preferred feeding sites. Pest management programs are still being developed, but trials suggest spraying the foliage of ornamental landscape plants in a rotation with insecticides containing acephate, imidacloprid and spinosad for homeowners or a rotation of acephate, spinosad, abamectin, and thiamethoxam for nursery and landscape professionals. Pyrethroid insecticides are not recommended since they do not impact chilli thrips populations and will have a negative effect on beneficial insects. If you are currently spraying for western flower thrips then you will probably not have a problem with chilli thrips. For more information please visit:

<http://chillithrips.tamu.edu>.

If you suspect that chilli thrips are present in your area, a sample of leaves or buds should be collected and placed into a sealed Ziploc bag to prevent the thrips escape (the thrips are usually only found on the stunted, folded areas of the plant). A dry piece of paper towel should be placed in the bag and the bag should be labeled with collection information including locality (city or town and county), date, species of host plant, and your name and contact information. The samples should be sent via express mail (next-day delivery) to your local Extension agent.



Photo of chilli thrips damage on roses. Photo by Scott Ludwig, Program Specialist-IPM, Texas AgriLife Extension.

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