



## Bug-Wise

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**Springtime Insect Management Issues:** Spring is a busy time. There's a lot to do in the yard and garden, as well as inside the house. Here are a few of the insect-related issues that most homeowners and gardeners need to keep in mind at this time.

**Fire Ants in Home Lawns:** Fire ant mounds become especially obvious in the spring because ants build their mounds higher to take advantage of solar warming and because wet soils force the ants to build mounds higher. Spring is a great time to start controlling fire ants, but you will have to be persistent throughout the year to achieve best results. The first step is to apply a granular fire ant bait using a small, handheld spreader to broadcast the bait over the entire lawn (Amdro, Extinguish, and Advion are three examples). Foraging fire ant workers will collect the granules, carry them back to their mounds, and feed them to the immature ants. Don't use too much bait. It only takes 1 to 2 lbs per acre for most baits. Read the label before you treat!

Baits are cheap, easy to apply, and they work great, but they are slow-acting—it takes four to six weeks for most baits to work. Plan on treating again in July and September, even if you don't see any fire ant mounds. Baits give about 80 to 90% control and will control many young fire ant colonies before their mounds ever become visible above the grass. If you apply baits three times a year on this schedule, you won't see many fire ant mounds in your yard. Keep a can of one of the dry mound treatments (Ortho Fire Ant Killer and Bayer Fire Ant Killer are two examples) on hand to eliminate any mounds you notice while working or playing in the yard. Apply by sprinkling the required amount directly on the mound.

See Extension Publication 2429, Control Fire Ants in Your Yard, for more details on fire ant biology and control, including information on how to kill fire ant mounds quickly with liquid mound drenches and how to use broadcast insecticide treatments (not the same as granular fire ant baits) to make your lawn inhospitable to fire ants.

<http://msucares.com/pubs/publications/p2429.pdf>

**Fire Ants in Pastures, Hayfields, and Barnyards:** Barn lots, horse pastures, sheep pens, and highly managed hay fields are examples of situations in which it may be desirable to control fire ants around grazing animals. Granular fire ant baits work well in such settings, but only certain baits are labeled for use around grazing animals. See Extension Publication 2493, Control Fire Ants in Pastures, Hayfields, and Barnyards for details on which baits to use and how to apply them. <http://msucares.com/pubs/publications/p2493.pdf>

**Azalea lace bugs:** Azaleas with bleached-looking or stippled leaves are most likely infested with azalea lace bugs, but check the undersides of the leaves to be sure. If lace bugs are the problem, you will probably find nymphs and adults on the undersides of the leaves, and you will definitely see their dark, shellac-like fecal deposits. Heavily infested plants are unsightly and unthrifty. Azaleas growing in full sun are especially susceptible. For quick control of heavy infestations, spray with an insecticide containing acephate (Bonide Systemic Insect Control is one example) and follow-up with a soil drench application of one of the soil-applied systemic insecticides, such as imidacloprid (Bayer Advanced Tree and Shrub Insect Control is one example) or dinotefuran (Greenlight Tree & Shrub Insect Control). Soil-applied systemics are good preventative treatments for azalea lace bugs—slow-acting, but long-lasting. But they are fairly expensive, so you probably won't want to treat all the azaleas in your landscape. Focus on plantings that have a history of lace bug problems or plantings growing in full sun. To protect native bees wait until plants have finished blooming before treating. See Extension Publication 2369, page 17, Insect Pests of Ornamental Plants in the Home Landscape, for more information on lace bugs.

<http://msucares.com/pubs/publications/p2369.pdf>

**Paper Wasps:** Wasps nests start out small, with only the founding queen, but by mid-summer a nest may be defended by dozens of these stinging insects. It's safer and easier to eliminate wasp nests while they are small. Keep a can of aerosol wasp spray on hand so you can treat wasps nest as you notice them and you will probably save someone in the family from an unpleasant stinging experience. Be aware that the "long-range" spray cans that shoot up to 15 feet or more are not always the best choice because they are hard to aim. Often, the products with the shorter range but broader spray pattern work best. Because paper wasps have a beneficial side—they are voracious predators of caterpillar pests—many gardeners avoid killing nests located where they are not likely to cause problems. See Extension Publication 2331, Control of Insect Pests in and Around the Home Lawn, page 13, for more information on bees and wasps. <http://msucares.com/pubs/publications/p2331.pdf>

**Ticks and Fleas:** Tick and flea activity increases in the spring and summer. Protect pets by treating with an appropriate 'on-pet' flea and tick treatment at regular intervals. This will help keep free ranging pets from bringing ticks into the yard. Be aware that cats are more insecticide sensitive than dogs and many treatments that are labeled for use on dogs can't be applied to cats. Fipronil works well on ticks and fleas, and there are labeled fipronil products for both dogs and cats. Permethrin products are only labeled for dogs. Several other on-pet tick treatments are available from your local Co-Op or veterinarian. Read the label carefully before you buy.

Use labeled lawn products containing permethrin, bifenthrin, or carbaryl to control ticks and fleas in the lawn. A hose-end sprayer is one of the easiest ways to treat lawns. Knowing a little about tick biology will help you know where to treat. Engorged female ticks drop off their host and deposit their egg masses, which hatch into hundreds of 'seed ticks', wherever they happen to fall. This can be anywhere in the yard, but occurs most commonly in areas where the pets spend time resting. This could be under shrubs, under the porch, or in other similar areas. Don't overlook these key sites when treating for ticks. This is also true for fleas. Flea infestations are usually concentrated around areas where pets spend time resting. See Extension Publication 2597, Control Fleas on Your Pet, in Your House, and in Your Yard, for more information on flea and tick control. <http://msucares.com/pubs/publications/p2597.pdf>

**Colorado Potato Beetles:** These insects can severely defoliate Irish potatoes, resulting in reduced yields. Both the yellow and black striped adults and their red and black grubs feed on leaves. This insect also occasionally attacks other solonaceous crops, such as eggplants and tomatoes. Hand-picking can be effective for light infestations on smaller plantings, but a foliar insecticide spray is required for heavy infestations or large plantings. Insecticides containing the active ingredient spinosad work great on potato beetles, and some formulations are approved for organic gardening. Fertilome, Bore, Bagworm, Leafminer, and Tent Caterpillar Spray, and Spinosad Lawn and Garden Spray are two examples. These spinosad products are most commonly used to control caterpillar pests and thrips, but they also work on some leaf-feeding beetle pests, especially Colorado potato beetles. See Extension Publication 2347, Insect Pests of the Home Vegetable Garden, page 5, and page 12-13. <http://msucares.com/pubs/publications/p2347.pdf>

**Clothes Moths and Carpet Beetles:** With so much to do outdoors it is easy to forget about those wool suits and sweaters stored in the closet. But if you don't take time to store wool, silk, and other susceptible clothing articles properly, you may be in for a disappointment when you get them out again next fall. Clothes moths and carpet beetles especially like soiled clothing. Sweat stains, skin oils and skin flakes provide them with extra nutrition. Have wool items cleaned before you store them. This will kill any eggs or larvae that are already present and reduce the potential for infestation. Store clothing in 'bug-tight' containers. Clothes moths and carpet beetles can't lay eggs in items they can't reach. Most dry cleaners wrap items in mothproof storage bags. Store sweaters and other susceptible items in bug-tight bags or plastic boxes with tight-fitting lids. See Extension Publication 2443, Control Household Insect Pests, pages 20-23, for more information on fabric pests and their control. <http://msucares.com/pubs/publications/p2443.pdf>

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This information is for educational and preliminary planning purposes only. Brand names mentioned in this publication are used as examples only. No endorsement of these products is intended. Other appropriately labeled products containing similar active ingredients should provide similar levels of control. Always read and follow the insecticide label.