In the Garden: Watch for signs of Green June Beetle, Walnut Caterpillar

Pair of pests are especially active right now, says K-State horticulture expert

By Pat Melgares, K-State Research and Extension news service

MANHATTAN, Kan. – As gardens and other landscape foliage spread their summer glory, a pair of pests threaten to make the show a short one.

Kansas State University horticulture expert Cynthia Domenghini has sounded the alarm on the Green June Beetle and the Walnut Caterpillar, which are especially active this time of year.

Here’s her rundown on those two pests.

Green June Beetle

Larvae are cream-colored grubs from one-quarter to 2 inches long, depending on the stage of molting. The adult beetle is nearly one-inch long with a velvety-green, oval shaped body. The edges of the body are orange-yellow and the wing covers are reddish-brown.

Larvae feed on decaying organic matter and roots. As the grubs tunnel below the ground, they can cause damage to lawns by feeding on the roots, pushing soil up through the tunnels and creating small mounds of dirt at the surface.

Larvae may also feed on underground vegetables, such as sweet potatoes and carrots. Adult beetles may skeletonize leaves, primarily of fruit trees, but also oak and maple trees. They can also eat fruit on the trees.

Homeowners can discourage feeding by applying general-use insecticides, including carbaryl (Sevin dust) and malathion. Follow insecticide label instructions for application rates and wait period between application and harvest.
Walnut Caterpillars

Young larvae are yellowish-green and one-quarter inch long. As they mature, the larvae turn dark red, and eventually almost black. They may grow to two inches long.

A larval shed – resembling a hairball – might be seen on the trunks of trees. When provoked, the caterpillar will arch its head and tail in defense.

The adult moth is light brown with four light brown stripes on the forewings. The wingspan is almost two inches across.

Larvae skeletonize plant leaves, while more mature larvae will consume the leaf entirely. They feed on a wide variety of deciduous trees, but tend to prefer walnuts, pecans and hickories.

Domenghini said Spinosad is an organic control option; some options include Natural Guard Spinosad, Captain Jack’s Deadbug Brew, Bonide Colorado Potato Beetle Beater and Monterey Garden Insect Spray.

Synthetic options include permethrin (under numerous trade names), malathion or cyfluthrin (including Tempo, BioAdvanced Vegetable and Garden Insect Spray).

Domenghini and her colleagues in K-State’s Department of Horticulture and Natural Resources produce a weekly Horticulture Newsletter with tips for maintaining home landscapes and gardens. Interested persons can subscribe to the newsletter, as well as send their garden and yard-related questions to Domenghini at cdom@ksu.edu, or contact your local K-State Research and Extension office.

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### Sidebar: Question of the Week

*After a recent storm, the damage sustained by one of my trees has red streaks in it. What is this? Could it have been struck by lightning?*

Wow! That is impressive damage. The photo you sent does indicate lightning damage and the tree should be removed for safety purposes.

The red color may be the result of the intense heat, which can cause the sap inside to boil and generate steam as cells explode. The red could be a burned area.

-- Cynthia Domenghini, K-State horticulture expert, Cdom@ksu.edu
FOR PRINT PUBLICATIONS: Links used in this story

K-State Horticulture Newsletter, https://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/horticulture-resource-center/horticulture-newsletter

K-State Research and Extension statewide offices, https://www.ksre.k-state.edu/about/statewide-locations

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