Hard-Hitting Insect Pests Continue Ahead of Schedule

Some of the nursery and landscape pests to be thinking about now are calico scale, Japanese maple scale, and bagworms. These and other updates are discussed below.

Pale pink calico scale eggs
Photo taken 04/26/12
Photo: Sarah J. Vanek, University of Kentucky

How to Look for Calico Scale Egg Hatch

Calico scale is a type of soft scale that **infests a large number of woody species** including maple, zelkova, honeylocust, dogwood, crabapple, elm, all stone fruit species, and many more.

This species of scale has one generation each year with egg hatch occurring in late May, typically. However, they are at least a couple weeks ahead of schedule this year.

When using an insecticide spray to target scales, **it is best to target the newly hatched "crawlers", which are now active on the branches.** Crawlers are very small and vulnerable to insecticides, and unlike other life stages, crawlers are mobile, making them more likely to encounter insecticide residues.

If you have an infestation of calico scale, **turn the adult females over to evaluate egg hatch**. Eggs are first white and progressively change to pale pink then a dusty dark pink just before hatching. Crawlers are orange and about the same size as the eggs.

If all you find is a **mass of fluffy , white material**, you've already missed crawler hatch. This material is the mass of egg shells left behind by crawlers. At that point, the majority of immature scales have probably already settled on the undersides of leaves where they spend the summer months. This is probably the second best stage to target because they are still very vulnerable to insecticides.

Dark pink calico scale eggs and newly hatched, orange crawlers
Photo taken 05/08/12
Photo: Sarah J. Vanek, University of Kentucky

Calico scale crawler hatch typically starts just as the adults start to turn from their brilliant black and white to a dull dark brown.
Photo: Sarah J. Vanek
University of Kentucky

Japanese Maple Scale: a Tiny Insect Creates Big Problems

Japanese maple scale is very difficult to detect and often **goes unnoticed**, even by landscape and nursery professionals, until infestations reach damaging levels. Damage from heavy infestations can include premature leaf drop, branch dieback, or even plant death. This armored scale is fairly widespread in the easternmost United States, but is also present in states as far west as Indiana, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Louisiana.

Scales, in general, are difficult pests to control. However, **this species is particularly challenging for a number of reasons**. One of the biggest issues is its greatly extended period of crawler activity, spreading at least from early to late summer. According to Dr. Paula Shrewsbury at University of Maryland, Japanese maple scale has **two peaks in crawler activity**, with the first peak around early June and the second peak around early August (in the years of the study). According to degree-day based predictions, **we may see this year's first peak in late May**.

Despite the name, Japanese maple scale attacks much more than just maple. Instead, it has a **very broad host range** covering at least twenty-some families and more than forty genera.

For more information about the biology and management of Japanese maple scale, see the fact sheet provided by University of Maryland.

Severe infestations of Japanese maple scale
Photos: Brian Kunkel, University of Delaware, Bugwood.org

Young bagworm larvae feeding and constructing bags
Photo: Sarah J. Vanek, University of Kentucky

Bagworm Egg Hatch

Bagworms are notorious pests of juniper, arborvitae, and cedar, among others, and these insects can easily go unnoticed until they have already caused considerable damage.

Often, when bagworms are noticed, insecticidal sprays are no longer effective. **If a chemical spray is used to control bagworms, it should be used soon after egg hatch.** Be sure to achieve thorough coverage, reaching inner as well as outer foliage.

Degree-day calculations suggest that bagworm egg hatch should have begun in the Lexington area within the last week.

An Update on Clearwing Borer Monitoring

As I recently mentioned, we are currently monitoring clearwing borers in four locations throughout central and western Kentucky. In the last couple weeks, we have noticed a pretty noticeable **increase in the number of lesser peachtree borers in the Lexington and Louisville areas**, and we have recently noticed the **first flight of oak borers in western Kentucky**.

Always Read and Follow Label Directions for Safe Use of Any Pesticide!

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