
SUNNYSIDE THYMES

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Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?

SMG Education Committee - Bonnie Cummings



Distinct black and white pattern around abdomen, smooth “shoulder” white bands on

Stink bugs - nobody likes them but they were never much of a nuisance until recently. There is a newcomer in our gardens that is especially voracious and harmful economically to the agriculture industry and a downright pest in our homes. The Brown Marmorated Stink Bug, *Halyomorpha halys*, (BMSB) is only one of at least 20 economically important stink bugs but it is quickly rising to the top of the list in terms of threat to farmers, growers and backyard gardeners. Crops at high risk include apples, beans, eggplant, grapes, peaches, okra, sweet corn and tomatoes. At lesser risk are apricots, asparagus, blueberries, broccoli, cherries, cauliflower, and cucumber. Ornamental trees such as Japanese pagoda tree, redbud, littleleaf linden, serviceberry and dogwood are also under attack.

This invasive species is native to China, Japan and Korea. It was first noticed in Pennsylvania in the 1990s and had become established by 2001. It is thought to have come from China in shipping containers and populations are growing exponentially due to the lack of natural predators, ability to reproduce in large numbers, wide host range, resistance to cold weather and ability to find winter shelter. It has spread to 41 states and Canada. It will eat almost anything and seems to like most of the same crops that humans do.

To add insult to injury, large populations invade houses in the fall in an attempt to overwinter. While they do not mate, reproduce or feed in our houses, they will find every crevice and crawl in, ready to disperse in the spring, find a mate and reproduce prolifically - one female can lay an average of 240 eggs per generation! Commercially, there are a number of

control options being researched after an initial disastrous beginning where pesticides were widely used, disrupting pollinators and beneficial insects. Integrated pest management techniques are favored and possible introduction of a parasitoid from BMSB's native region is under discussion.

But what can the backyard gardener do? The best approach is to exclude them from your home, thereby forcing them to overwinter where our cold temperatures can kill many of them. Pay special attention to the west side of the house, caulking all holes and making sure windows and screens fit tightly. Cover attic and foundation vents with screens and make sure the chimney is covered by a screen. Weatherstrip doors and try placing a box filled with straw or paper outside to attract the bugs before they get close to your house. Deet, a common bug repellent, has been found to be effective when sprayed around the OUTSIDE of windows. Don't use foggers inside since dead bugs in wall crevices may attract flies and produce an odor. Vacuuming them up is also effective but will make your vacuum cleaner have a bad odor! A desk lamp over a pan of soapy water into which they may drop (since they are attracted to light) is also a suggestion.

Information in this article was derived from the publication, 'The IPM Practitioner' and specifically an article by Dr. William Quarles "IPM for the Brown Marmorated Stink Bug" as well as Stop BMSB.org of the USDA.
