

## Kudzu Bug Pest Alert

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In the last couple of weeks, I have seen the kudzu bug swarming around my house. The kudzu bug, also known as *Megacopta cribraria*, is once again moving from its preferred host in search of protected sites where it will spend the winter. Once on the move, the adult bugs are attracted to light-colored surfaces, landing on people, vehicles, and buildings. They are a nuisance pest for those living in our urban and suburban areas. And, this mass migration results in complaints and inquiries to pest control operators, Cooperative Extension offices, and the media.

The cool temperatures we have been experiencing coupled with the senescing of kudzu, its preferred host, are likely causes of the mass migration. The same phenomenon was seen in the late fall of 2009 and 2010 when the bugs moved from kudzu in search of sites in which they will spend the winter, in a mostly inactive state. In the spring, these adults emerge, lay eggs on sprouting kudzu, and begin building large populations of the insect that may also infest soybeans and a plethora of other leguminous plants (including beans and other legumes in home gardens) found in the Georgia landscape.

Unfortunately, there have not been any significant developments in controlling this nuisance pest in suburban and urban environments. Research on its control in urban and suburban settings, however, will continue. We are hopeful that the large numbers of these insects we currently see reflect a “colonization effect” of these recent invaders from Asia. If so, we will likely see kudzu bugs reach an ecological equilibrium in which their numbers are not as high as we see now. Until then there are a few tips that homeowners might consider:

- Seal, with caulk or screen, all cracks around windows and doors, and make sure there are no gaps under doors and around soffits. Install doorsweeps on all outside doors, if necessary.
- Kudzu bugs should not be killed inside. They should be vacuumed if found inside to prevent the noxious odor/exudate from penetrating and, perhaps, staining indoor surfaces.
- At this time of year (mid-October to mid-November), kudzu bugs are most active in the afternoon as temperatures warm up later in the day. As such, plan outdoor activities in the morning, if possible, or move activities indoors.
- Kudzu bugs can be killed with pyrethroid insecticides applied directly to the insects, e.g., while resting on outside walls. However, given the peak of flight activity currently occurring, homeowners should expect significant re-invasion within a day or so. If homeowners choose to use an insecticide, they must read and follow the product’s label (it’s the law), and never use a pyrethroid insecticide in an area where it might contaminate water as these insecticides are very toxic to fish and other aquatic life. Alternatively, homeowners can contact their local pest management company and have them inspect and evaluate the situation.
- No traps have been commercialized (and shown to be effective) in attracting and killing large numbers of kudzu bugs. Scientifically valid chemical attractants have not yet been identified.
- The flight will subside, based on our experience, in late November, but the bugs will once again become active, and mildly troublesome in the spring of 2012 as they awake from their winter slumber. In light of this, if kudzu can be removed from the property, it is recommended that this be done in order to eliminate potential problems once again in October 2012.

For more information on the kudzu bug, contact the Extension office at 706-554-2119.