

November 2011

Athens-Clarke County Cooperative Extension

Shades of Green

From Gardeners, To Gardeners

What's Buggin' You? By Dan Suiter and Wayne Gardner, UGA Entomologists**Inside this issue:**

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Follow this link for additional information on the kudzu bug:

http://www.caes.uga.edu/applications/publications/files/pdf/C%20991_1.PDF

Megacopta cribraria, also known as the kudzu bug, is once again moving from its preferred host to 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 urban or suburban areas.



The cool temperatures we have been experiencing coupled with the senescing (die-back) of kudzu (its preferred host) are likely causes of the mass migration. The same phenomenon was seen during the last couple years 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. Kudzu bugs also infest soybeans and a plethora of other leguminous plants found in the Georgia landscape (including beans and other legumes in home gardens).

Unfortunately, there have not been any significant developments in controlling this nuisance pest in suburban and urban environments. Research on its control in these settings will continue.

Until then there are a few tips that homeowners might consider:

—Seal, with caulk or screening, 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. If kudzu bugs are killed indoors a noxious odor/exudate often penetrates and, perhaps, stains indoor surfaces. Instead, these insects should be vacuumed and released outdoors.



—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.

—Kudzu bugs can be killed with pyrethroid insecticides applied directly to the

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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. Alternative-

ly, 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.

Based on our experience, the flight will subside, in late November, but the bugs will once again become active, and mildly trou-

blesome 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.

Dan Suiter and Wayne Gardner are University of Georgia, department of entomology specialist at the Griffin, GA campus.

Q and A, Spiders in the Garden By Amanda Tedrow

I have large wooden planters outside my house. Black widow spiders have decided the planters are a great new home. I have small children and I'm worried about them getting bitten when they are playing outside. How can I get rid of the spiders? Jeff B. Athens



Black widow spiders prefer dark quiet areas. Outdoors, wood and rubble piles are ideal sites for a web, so the edges of your wooden planters are probably the next best thing. Once temperatures de-

crease the spiders may move inside to cluttered, rarely disturbed areas such as a garage, basement or crawlspace. Black widow spiders are nocturnal, preferring dark, sheltered spots during the day and emerging at night into the center of the web to collect food.

To prevent the spiders from coming indoors, make sure window screens are tight fitting and door sweeps are utilized. Use yellow light bulbs outdoors to attract fewer insects around the house. Fewer insects means less food for the spiders. Remove ivy, ground covers and firewood from around the foundation. This vegeta-



tion will not only provide a home for the spiders but will attract insects on which the spiders would feed.



If chemical control is necessary, non-repellent powdered insecticides can be applied to the web which will kill the spiders when they move across the web. Aerosol sprays can be used to directly kill individual spiders, but egg sacs will not be affected by the spray.

Raised Beds for the Vegetable Garden by John Aitkens

Early this spring after tilling my small 40'x60' veggie garden, I finally got around to doing something I have been putting off for years -- building raised beds. As I get older, the attraction of not having to bend down so far to pick beans is very appealing!

I used 2"x12"x12' pressure treated pine lumber and 3" exterior screws. Quantity depends on how many beds you want to build. Most of mine are 12' long x 3' wide, but several beds are shorter and/or narrower to most efficiently fit my garden space. I arrived at the widths based on having two to three rows of plants, plus the ability to reach in and tend the middle row. In the case of most plantings, two rows was the norm. About 2 to 3 of these planks were needed for most of my beds. Creosoted railroad ties are not recommended because of leaching, but if you have some concrete blocks or bricks available, they work just as well and the price would be right!



After cutting the lumber to the desired lengths, I painted it with an exterior latex paint. An oil based paint might help preserve the wood longer, but I was

concerned about it leaching into my beds. I researched latex paint and did not find any warnings about leaching. Another more organic option is to use untreated lumber, then paint it with two coats of linseed oil. However, pressure treated pine painted with latex paint will last as long as I will want to be gardening!



I first pre-drilled holes at each corner before screwing the sides together. You don't want to try to drive 3" screws through treated pine without first pre-drilling holes. Yes, you can use nails, but screws make for a more permanent frame. Once you level up your frame with small rocks or bits of brick, you can backfill it with the original soil. Then I filled the walkways with pine straw and planted marigolds and herbs at each end of the beds. I had some pretty good soil in the beds after 10 years of amending it, but heard about the compost available at the Athens-Clarke County Landfill on Lexington Road. It's \$20 a cubic yard which fills a pick up truck bed or utility trailer. It's made up of ground leaf and limb debris plus Athens-

Clarke County sewer sludge, more aesthetically called "biosolids", and is turned regularly for a year or so until it becomes Black Gold! It is the consistency of dark potting soil with an earthy aroma. This compost is monitored by the EPD and is considered safe to handle. My veggies have just exploded out of the ground this year! But if you don't feel comfortable using this amendment or don't have a way of hauling it, I recommend your own home grown compost, or most any of the bagged soil amendments available from your local garden center. But amend your soil! Veggies just don't thrive in pure Georgia clay!



Finally I got ambitious and put in a drip irrigation system controlled by inexpensive timers. It puts the water at the roots where I needed it, not on the leaves where the bugs and disease like it. This long, hot summer was a true test for my new raised beds and watering system, and I was not disappointed.

Pollinator Gardens: Just the basics by Kim Sutherland

The world-wide decline in crucial insect pollinator populations has caused increasing concern in recent years. Both agricultural crops and wild plants in natural areas depend on animals to transfer pollen from one plant to another. As pollinators succumb to habitat loss and degradation from chemicals in the environment, both wildlife and humans feel the impact. One way you can help is to create a designated pollinator garden on your property. To create a safe haven for our fascinating and beautiful pollinators, your garden should provide all of their basic needs:

Sunny spots and Shelter

Insects are cold blooded and need sunny spots such as boulders or stone benches to rest and warm their bodies on cool days. Insects and hummingbirds both need safe, sheltered places to rest. An ideal garden would have an open, sunny area surrounded by hedges and trees.



Pollinators of Georgia

Bees	Wasps
Butterflies	Beetles
Moths	Flies
Ants	Spiders

Some birds- especially the ruby-throated hummingbird

Also, some mammals such as bats, mice and humans.

Nectar source

Pollinating insects and hummingbirds need nectar as a food source. By providing nectar plants with different flower colors and shapes, you can attract different pollinators. Butterflies and hummingbirds prefer red, orange, or yellow flowers. Butterflies like flowers that have a wide open shape giving them a perch while they drink nectar. Hummingbirds hover as they drink nectar and prefer trumpet or tube-shaped flowers. Bees prefer blue or yellow flowers; it is believed that they cannot see the color red. Ideally, your garden will bloom with nectar-producing flowers consistently throughout the spring, summer, and fall.



Host Plants or Nesting Sites

Butterflies and moths lay their eggs on specific host plants to provide their caterpillars with suitable food. Certain butterflies are very choosy, only laying their eggs on one particular genus of plant, (e.g., Monarch butterflies and milkweeds). Some butterflies choose only plants in a particular family (Cabbage Whites and Brassicas) and others will put their eggs on a variety of plants. (such as Mourning Cloaks laying on several different trees). Bees, wasps, and birds do not require host plants, but you can provide them with nesting sites and materials. Some bees, and wasps, need soil or sand in order to build or seal their nests. Others need standing dead trees, stumps or old posts into which to drill their nest holes. Hummingbirds require tall trees in which to construct their nests of spider webs and lichens.



Water

All animals need a source of water. For insects, a low bowl or pan filled with gravel or sand can be buried with its rim at ground level. Hummingbirds are attracted to gently sprinkling water, but will bathe in the water held on large leaves after a rain.

A Chemical Free Habitat

Since many insects, particularly bees, are sensitive to chemicals in their environment, the ideal pollinator garden should avoid the use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, or herbicides. Biodiversity in the garden is actually an asset and some weedy plants like grasses, clovers, and plantains enrich the pollinator habitat.

Pollinator gardens provide year-round visual interest and an ever-changing parade of characters to excite and inspire children and adults alike.

Stay tuned for more in the next issue: "Pollinator Gardens: In 15 Species or Less"

Kim Sutherland is a Georgia Master Gardener and is the current chair of Monarchs Across Georgia.

To find out more visit:

www.monarchsacrossga.org

Or contact Kim at:

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Beauregard's Revenge by Helen Wenner

It had to be karma. How else can I explain why some of our veggies this year struggled and succumbed to cosmic forces beyond their power to combat, such as squash bugs and kudzu beetles, while other crops thrived as never before? It could have nothing to do with my gardening prowess (or lack of it); therefore, it can only mean that some of the vegetables were experiencing bad karma and others good karma.



Take our Beauregard sweet potatoes as an example of good karma. The 9 little babies I brought home from the box store took to their row in the garden immediately. I planted them as the directions indicated, about 2 ½ feet apart and a good 3 feet away from anything else. With a fence on one side and neighboring eggplant and pepper babies on the other I thought they had plenty of room to grow. I do not know what conversations might have ensued between the plants, but soon it was apparent that the Beaus were bent on taking over the turf that belonged to their neighbors. Warfare ensued.

At that point, the eggplant and pepper Alliance made the karmic mistake that ultimately sealed their fate: they called in the deer. Only once this year did deer manage to sneak thru the razor wire electrified fence that protects the vegetables, and in that

one nighttime incursion they razed the Beaus to the ground. Nothing else was touched. The Alliance had seemingly triumphed.

Time passed. New shoots popped up in the Beaus' row. Tendrils fanned out like kudzu, reaching south through the fence and north over to the Alliance like a handshake of peace, a promise of coexistence. Not! Before long the Beau foliage was so thick and deep I could no longer venture into their half of the garden plot. The members of the Alliance were chained down with Beau greenery and it was all I could do to stop the vines before they marched over my beloved tomatoes as well. Should I have intervened and imposed a truce? I didn't dare.

September passed, as did half of October. It was time to dig potatoes, we reckoned. Never having grown sweet potatoes before, we had no idea what we were in for. Armed with a pitch forky thing and a shovel, we attacked the plants, ripping out the vines up and down the row. The Alliance plants—what were left of them—breathed audible sighs of relief as they were unchained, revealing skele-



tal remains of misshapen eggplants and tortured, multicolored peppers. As for the Beaus, which are now naked down to the ground, I began to dig about into their bunkers searching for tubers. What I discovered amazed me.

There were sweet potato tubers beyond all expectations in size, number and shape. Some were as big as footballs (no joke), some were as long as 15 inches, and some were found hiding over a yard from their respective bunkers. When the excavation was all over, we ended up with hundreds of potatoes. After drying them on the lawn and curing them best we could up in the hay loft (the warmest place we could find for a while) we transferred them to racks in the dark, cool basement and began the lengthy process of giving them away and researching recipes. Having been warned that the big ones might be mealy or stringy, I tackled one of the giants with a butcher knife, peeling him and boiling up the chunks before roasting it with a butter and brown sugar glaze. It was delicious all the way through the week. That one potato made enough casserole to serve 8-10 people.

So what have I learned from this karmic experience? Apparently, Beauregard sweet potatoes are powerfully strong vegetables that you'd better not try to bully or tease, as they will overwhelm you. And if you are brave enough to plant them next year, plan on giving them the whole garden because they will take it over anyway. But the bounty you can expect to harvest will feed you all winter long. I'm thinking our Oconee Plant-A-Row for the Hungry garden might just receive a surprise 9-pack of baby Beauregards next spring....

Gardening Events in Our Area

Athens Community Tree Council Annual Tree Fair. Saturday, November 5, 2011, from 8-12 at Bishop Park in Athens. Trees can be purchased at the event or pre-ordered: <http://athenstrees.com/docs/2011preorder.pdf>

PLACE's Fall Pie Contest. Saturday, November 12, 2011, 10:00am till the pie runs out, Athens Farmers Market, Bishop Park. \$5

Making Herbal Cordials for Fun and Holiday Gifts. Tuesday, November 15, 2011. 6:30-8:30pm. State Botanical Garden of Georgia. \$36 www.uga.edu/botgarden

Autumn Harvest Feast. Sunday, November 6, 2011, 4pm at The Hill. A family style dinner and silent auction benefiting Wholesome Wave Georgia and Classic City Chef's Association www.athensfarmersmarket.net

Shiitake Mushroom Workshop, Saturday, December 3, 2011, 9-3pm. UGA Horticulture Greenhouses on South Milledge Avenue. \$65 for Georgia Organics and PLACE members and & \$75 for non-members.

Earth Skills Series—Shelter. Saturday, November 19, 2011, 9-3pm. State Botanical Garden of Georgia \$66. www.uga.edu/botgarden



"What is a weed? A weed is a plant whose virtues have not yet been discovered."

-Emerson



One of my favorite sayings is "Fall is the time for planting". After such a hard summer I am really excited about getting some plants in the ground. I've been holding some plants in a kiddie pool on my back porch for way too long but they are still alive. This may be the weekend they finally get their roots into the ground.

Like many people right, now we are attempting to be more self-reliant. I love my vegetable garden and lots of the plants which need to go in the ground are fruiting trees and shrubs such as blueberries, apples, and pears.

While I know it will be a few years before the bounty is coming in from these fruit plants I know that it will pay off eventually.

Amanda Says

Another great saying is "Fall is the time for planning." I mentioned previously that I'm planning the Master Gardener program for 2012, but I'm also really excited about the first ever Georgia Master Composter program that I'm working on with our local recycling coordinator.

The program will be eight weeks long on Tuesday nights from 6-8pm, starting January 10th. We are going to cover so many areas of composting and even have a whole class on troubleshooting. If you enjoy composting currently or if you are curious to learn more about the topic send me an email (atedrow@uga.edu) and I will send you the application. It really will be a great class!

Outdoor Water Restrictions: Clarke, Barrow, Oconee & Jackson Counties

Outdoor water use for Clarke, Barrow, Oconee, and Jackson Counties is now limited to one day per week with even number addresses allowed to water on Saturday and odd number addresses allowed to water on Sunday. The ban on watering between 10:00 AM and 4:00 PM remains in effect on Saturdays and Sundays.

THE FOLLOWING USES ARE EXEMPT FROM ALL HOURLY AND DAY OF THE WEEK RESTRICTIONS.

- Drip Irrigation
- Soaker Hoses
- Hand Watering
- Food Gardens
- New installations of plants and turf (with a permit)
- Grey Water, Rainwater and AC Condensation Reuse
- Golf Course- Tee and Green Irrigation
- Plants for sale, resale, or installation

For more information and additional exemptions please see the following link:

<http://athensclarkecounty.com/index.aspx?NID=1243>



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