

Kudzu Bug on the Prowl

By Forrest Connelly

If you haven't noticed by now there is a new bug in town. We have had quite a few calls in the last week or two about a certain insect that is covering sides of homes, buildings, window screens and automobiles. Initially it may seem to resemble a lady beetle and in many ways its actions mirror a lady beetle. They stay together in high numbers and will lite on anything to keep warm. The surfaces usually selected are the afore mentioned homes, cars, etc.

While many people can't seem to recognize the bug, it is because in all likelihood they have not seen it before. In fact the first time this insect was ever identified in GA or to my knowledge in the U.S was last year. The initial counties they were discovered in were several counties north of Atlanta. The ones closest to us are Jackson and Barrow. Last year we had an Agri-Tourism Tour which covered Rabun County. I captured and identified one of the insect culprits up there. But after further investigation, an attendee of conference was from Jackson County. Having only found one insect I came to the conclusion that the bug caught a ride with the attendee and decided to stop off and see the wine and apple country.

Anyway, back to the pest itself. It is from Asia and most likely hitched hiked its way to the U.S. via Hartsfield Airport in Atlanta last year and made its way to the North GA counties. It is a small olive-green colored bug with light brown speckles and when crushed emits an odor (like lady beetles). Its scientific name is *megacopta cribraria*. When first discovered last year it was found flying around kudzu patches. Because of its preferred host, we have aptly named it the Kudzu bug. At this point we believe it will spread into areas that have kudzu. I think for anyone that has spent any time in Georgia that means its coverage area could be all across the state. For the optimists, the kudzu bug will not wipe out our kudzu crop (no such luck). In fact, the kudzu bug made its way on to one of GA's row crops; soybeans. We have several trials throughout NE Ga counties to see if the kudzu bug will actually affect our soybean crop.

As far as control goes a vacuum cleaner is an easy way to remove them if they have entered your home. If control outside is desired almost any insecticide will help suppress them.

While typically insects can be a nuisance or just kind of boring, this pest has been quite interesting and has stimulated many a conversation the past two years. It is established well into about 60 North GA counties this year. Give me a call if you have any questions.