



## **Pest Corner**

October, 2005

### **Crane Flies**

Adult crane flies have very long legs and look like huge mosquitoes. Homeowners are alarmed when thousands of them gather on the sides of homes. However, the crane fly does not bite or sting and does no damage to a house.

Adult crane flies emerge from the soil of lawns, pastures, and other grass areas from late August to mid-September. The females mate and lay eggs in grass within 24 hours after emerging. The eggs hatch into small, gray-brown, wormlike larvae commonly called "leatherjackets." The leatherjackets feed on the root crowns of clover and grass during the fall. They overwinter in the leatherjacket stage and continue to feed the following spring until about mid-May. Damage caused by their feeding may become especially noticeable in March and April. Leatherjackets mostly stay underground during the day, but on damp, warm nights they come to the surface to feed on the aboveground parts of many plants.

One indication of a crane fly infestation is the sudden appearance of birds feeding on lawns. A more scientific approach, and the one recommended by WSU, is to randomly select four or five spots in the lawn (one square foot each). Dig up the top one to two inches and count the larvae. If the average number of leatherjackets for these samples exceeds 25-30 per square foot, consider a recommended chemical treatment, such as Sevin. As always follow the label.

### **Watercore In Apples**

If you bite into an apple and find that the area near the core has a water-soaked appearance, you are observing "watercore." Watercore is a physiological disorder that develops in the fruit flesh while the fruit is on the tree. It increases in severity as the fruit matures.

Watercore is most likely to occur during cool nights and sunny days; the same conditions that give good color and fruit maturity. During sunny days, the leaves are manufacturing considerable photosynthates (sugars) that should eventually be stored as carbohydrates in the fruit. However, the fruit is stuffed too full of photosynthates to be converted to carbohydrates, resulting in watercore.

Watercore is not all bad. Fruit in this condition has a little higher early firmness and is quite juicy. Sometimes watercore apples are advertised as having an abundance of “nature’s nectar.” The only problem is that watercore apples often can’t be stored for more than about four months.

Since watercore will be worse in over-mature apples, pick apples at the proper stage of maturity. The following varieties are susceptible to watercore: King, Gravenstein, Winter Banana, Jonathan, Delicious and Winesap.

### **Ladybird Beetles**

Most everyone associates ladybird beetles with their beneficial ability to control insect pests, such as aphids and scale. Asian ladybird beetles, however, have become a real nuisance in the past several years because of their habit of congregating in homes during the fall to pass the winter months. One of their defensive tactics is to emit a foul smelling substance when disturbed. When hundreds or thousands of them are grouped together, the odor is greatly intensified and often becomes very objectionable.

Asian ladybird beetles are most attracted to buildings where abrupt color contrasts occur longitudinally. For example, black shutters on a white house, dark windows on a light colored house, or light colored gutter drain pipes on a dark house. When they land on a house they begin looking for corners, cracks or other “protected nooks” to overwinter. Once there, the beetles eventually find their way into the home through small cracks or openings, in window sills, door jams or foundations.

As a preventive measure use a good quality silicone or silicone-latex caulk to seal cracks around windows, doors, siding, fascia boards, utility pipes and other potential entry points. Repair damaged window screens and install insect screening behind attic vents.