

County Agent News
“All Around the Farm”
Dan Folske
May 11, 2015

We finally got some needed rain last week. The Bowbells area received about 65 one hundredths of an inch. I’ve heard both lesser and greater amounts from around the area. Unfortunately the heaviest reports have come from the areas which were the wettest before the rain. I’m writing this on Friday May 8th and there is frost and cool temperatures in the forecast for the next several days. By the time you are reading this both daytime highs and night time lows are predicted to be on the warmer side again.

Are the bugs eating your garden or crop? As the growing season begins, so does the bug season. I get a lot of calls through the summer relating to insect identification and calls about “how to kill the bugs in my garden”. Not all insects are harmful. You can’t judge by “It looks really ugly and nasty” either. Two mis-categorized insect calls I often get are beneficial wasps and Lady beetle larvae. Although Yellow Jacket Wasps can be a real nuisance and even deadly for someone allergic to their stings there are many wasp species which do not sting and which are very beneficial. Most of these are parasitic wasps which have an ovipositor (looks like a big stinger) with which eggs are deposited into the egg or developing larvae of another insect species. The developing wasp larvae then consume the host larva. One very tiny wasp common in this area is the one which parasitizes the orange wheat blossom midge. Another one which I get calls about is a large wasp similar in appearance to a yellow jacket but at least 50% larger with an ovipositor over an inch longer helps control wood boring insects in trees.



Lady Beetle Larvae
NDSU

In the category of “it’s so ugly it has to be bad” is a ½ inch long bug which looks often described as looking like a black or dark gray alligator with orange or yellow bands. It is actually the larvae of the common Lady beetle. Adult Lady beetles can eat over 200 aphids per day.



My straw bale gardens are off to a rocky start. The cucumbers, cabbage and marigold which I transplanted into straw bales are holding their own but the peppers have succumbed to whipping from the high winds this past week. The yellow summer squash plants were really set back when transplanted into the hay bales but looked like they were going to survive until something dug them up on Wednesday. Whatever it was did not eat them, just dug them up leaving them lay next to the holes. The tomatoes planted into the hay bales also appear to be dying. I suspect the heat produced by the composting hay is the culprit. The bale with the tomatoes in it has really heated up. The internet stories about bale gardening say the heat of composting is supposed to help keep the young plants from freezing and that may be working on the straw bales which are not heating and composting as quickly. None of the seeds which I have planted into thin layers of potting mix on the bales have emerged yet. I have these bales sitting on pallets and I moved them into the shed last night because of the freezing temps in the forecast.