

County Agent News
“All Around the Farm”
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Bug Season

The ticks and mosquitoes are out in force and the mosquitoes will most likely get worse considering all the standing water from the recent rains which will make great mosquito larva nurseries. Another insect to be watching for is the Yellow Headed Spruce Sawfly larva. Now that the new needles have emerged on the spruce trees you need to watch closely for these tiny larvae. They are pale green with a yellow or tan head and blend in with the needles making them difficult to spot. Often the first sign noticed is a few needles turning pink and curling. When the larvae are very tiny they eat on the needles without consuming them entirely causing the color change and abnormal growth. As the larvae grow they begin to consume the entire needle. They are easy to control at this stage with insecticides approved for use on trees and ornamentals. I often get calls in late July or early August about spruce trees turning brown. At that time of the season the stem of the new growth is hardening and turning brown. If all the new needles have been consumed by the sawfly larvae then the tree appears to turn brown as the new stem growth makes its normal change to brown. By that time it is too late to do any control as the larvae have already dropped off the tree and burrowed into the old needles beneath the tree where they will pupate and over winter.



Not all bugs are bad. The following article is from the latest issue of the Crop & Pest Report.

This week's featured bug is the syrphid fly or hoverfly (Diptera: Syrphidae). There are about 1,000 species of syrphid flies in North America, and are common in field crops. The adult looks like a bee or wasp with its yellow and black pattern on the abdomen. It even buzzes like a bee but is stingless! But, if you look closely it only has two wings so it is a fly, not a wasp with 4 wings. The immature stage is a maggot that looks like a slug, about ½ inch long (mature) and pale green, yellow, brown or pink.



Adults are important pollinators and feed on aphid honeydew, pollen and nectar of plants. Larvae are important predators of phytophagous insects, and will feed on aphids, leafhoppers, thrips and other soft bodied insects like small caterpillars. Larvae often raise and swing their head side to side as it searches for prey. Each larva will consume about 400 aphids during its development. When syrphid fly larvae are abundant, they can reduce aphid populations by 70 to 100%!