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MIDWEST INSECT PROBLEMS

by Stanley Rachesky
Entomologist, University of Illinois

Fall has arrived and so has the **boxelder bug**. This is a red and black bug that loves to feed on the leaves and seed pods of boxelder trees. Any damage to the tree is very slight. However, what it doesn't do to the tree it does to man by being a plain ole' nuisance. It congregates in fantastic numbers and migrates to nearby buildings for winter protection. For control, removal of the seed-bearing boxelder tree would probably be the most helpful. For quick kill indoors use either dichlorvos 0.5% or pyrethrin 0.1% in oil and pick them up with a vacuum cleaner.

Another insect that inhabits the boxelder tree is called the **boxelder aphid**. This is a pale green, relatively hairy plant louse that will once in a while overpopulate a tree and cause some injury. Great quantities of honeydew secreted by the aphid covering sidewalks and anything else below causes a secondary problem. Aphids have great reproductive powers and damage to the trees are not caused by only a few of these insects but by their ability to multiply in great numbers in a short time. Control can be easily gained by treating the tree with Malathion.

The **eastern tent caterpillar** is another pest of boxelder and I thought I'd mention it here even though it's not a fall problem, but causes headaches in the spring of the year. The black, hairy caterpillars construct tents in the spring on the fork or tip of a branch. They'll use the tent for a house at night and leave it to feed during the day. This goes on for about 5-6 weeks. The adult is a moth that emerges in the early summer. About every 10 years it is found to occur in great abundance. There is only one generation produced per year.

This insect pest is usually kept under control by having natural enemies. However, if spraying is warranted Carbaryl (Sevin) or Malathion can be used. Sprays should be applied to the foliage when the worms are first noticed. Keep your eyes open next spring as this caterpillar is also found on black cherry, choke cherry, apple, elms, maples and oaks.

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