

THIS IS YEAR OF THE APHID

The summer of 1976, as far as insects go, has got to be "the year of the aphid."

They continue to be a problem on shade trees, especially ash, oak, poplar, and maple. Warm, humid weather can help to control the aphids because such conditions favor fungus diseases of aphids, which drastically reduces their numbers. So far (and I'm not complaining) the summer has been hot and dry -- and full of aphids.

If aphids continue to curl foliage and secrete their sticky honeydew, apply a spray containing the insecticide malathion, according to label directions.

Aphids are annoying little insects. They begin by living out the winter as a very tiny, fertilized egg, glued to some perennial plant that is left over in your vegetable garden, or whatever, on your property. In the spring when the weather warms, small aphids, called nymphs, hatch and quickly grow into adult aphids without wings.

These wingless adult aphids are called stem mothers and have the potential of producing millions of offspring. In fact, their reproductive potential is so great that each stem mother has the capability of producing 1,520 aphids to the 21st power, each season ... just add 21 zeros to 1,520!

The stem mothers are all females and produce their offspring without mating. All insects develop from eggs. However, the stem mothers' offspring are born alive, hatching from the egg internally.

As generations of aphids continue during the season, either all or part of a generation develop wings. The winged aphids fly to other plants. These winged aphids are called summer migrants. They settle down on the new host plant and begin a series of successive generations -- all produced as before, from unfertilized eggs that hatch inside the body of the mother.

As summer comes to an end and as the days begin to shorten, the summer host plant either dies or becomes dormant. At this time, a winged generation, including males, is produced. This is the first appearance of males in the aphid colonies, which are brought about by the onset of cooler weather.

The others are winged females, which are called fall migrants. These fall migrants give birth to nymphs in the normal aphid manner, but the nymphs are true females when fully grown. These females cannot give birth unless they mate with the male aphid. After mating is completed, the true females lay one to four, or more large fertilized eggs in a sheltered area of the host plant. Next season, it starts all over again.

PEST-ASIDE
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