

Super Tip

Beer, Bananas and a Bath: a Deadly Combination

By Darren Davis,

Often in the golf course management profession, when a unique or innovative idea is discovered, word travels fast. Brian Beckner, golf course superintendent at LaPlaya Golf Club in Naples, recently visited me for a little turf talk over lunch. While the topic was not the most appetizing, Beckner excitedly spun a tale of a massive bug slaughter occurring at The Old Collier Golf Club. The most interesting part of the story was that the control agent being used was not a traditional chemical or pesticide; rather it was a combination of beer, bananas, and soapy water!

Beckner's enthusiasm was replicated when I visited the source of the yarn, Todd Draffen, golf course superintendent at the Old Collier Golf Club. Draffen, a graduate of the four-year turf program at Ohio State University, has been employed at the Old Collier Golf Club for four years. He followed his current employer, Tim Hiers, when Hiers made the cross-town move from Colliers Reserve.

On a recent visit to Old Collier, Draffen provided me an education on the "beer, banana and bath" technique aimed at reducing the large population of the predominant flower beetle (*Euphoria sepulcralis*) at Old Collier. The problem is not the adult beetle but rather the grub it produces. While the grub is not harmful to the turfgrass, it burrows in the soil and the turf was being destroyed by armadillos and raccoons digging for them.

Dr. Eileen Buss at the University of Florida identified the flower beetle for Draffen and also gave him the Super Tip on how to reduce the population of the beetle on the property. Her tip was to construct a homemade trap that would capture the beetles when they were active in flight. The foundation of the trap is a one-gal-

lon plastic milk jug. Two of the upper sides of the container are removed to create 4-inch-square openings on two sides of the jug. A paper clip is then used to suspend an empty plastic yogurt cup in the upper half of the milk jug. Once put in use, the yogurt cup is filled with 3-4 ounces of beer and several slices of a very ripe banana. In the bottom of the milk jug, 2-3 inches of soapy water (a bath) is added.

The homemade trap is hung in a tree by rope and is placed in areas known to have a high grub count. When the adult beetles are in flight, which occurs almost year round in South Florida, they are attracted to the container by the sweet banana which they feed upon.

they are so drunk from the beer that they fall into the soapy water and die.

Draffen said he placed 11 traps on the course and, during periods of high adult activity, the traps are refreshed daily. He removed, on average, 300-400 beetles a day from each trap. The downside is that it takes him approximately an hour a day to refresh the traps in peak periods. Consequently, due to time constraints he does not have visions of the traps resulting in complete eradication of the beetle population, but he does see it as a valuable tool in his IPM toolbox to lower the overall numbers and thus reduce the foraging damage by predator animals.

While the Flower Beetle is the primary adult beetle found in the traps at Old Collier, other species of beetles and other insects are also found. When contacted, Dr. Buss concurred with this observation. In fact, she utilizes the beer, banana, bath technique to perform insect surveys when she needs to see what species are flying in a particular area. As to the



Catch and kill flying beetles in this homemade trap and you can eliminate damage from animals digging up your course looking for their hatching grubs in the turf. Photo by Darren Davis.

Simultaneously the beetles consume some of the beer in the same cup. When the beetles try to climb out of this tempting "cup of delicacies"

original source of the story, Brian Beckner, he continues to utilize this innovation on his golf course with very good success.