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New insecticides fight pests naturally

■ Some trees have a natural insect repelling ability, and several companies want to cash in on it.

Western red cedar is one tree which naturally wards off pests. Cedar-Al products Inc. in Clallam Bay, Wash., is marketing a mixture of cedar essence and water, called Cedar Oil.

The company currently sells \$1 million annually in room deodorizers. But preliminary tests show that Cedar Oil is effective against gypsy moths. If the EPA approves Cedar Oil as a pesticide, the company's sales could jump to \$20 million.

"Natural pesticides are clearly the wave of the future," says Robert Metcalf, professor of entomology at the University of Illinois.

Stimson Lumber Co. of Forest Grove, Ore., wants EPA approval for a natural insecticide which fights pine beetles. Norpine, made from a chemical found in pine trees, is being tested by the Agriculture Department and the Forest Service.

A British Columbia company, Safer-Agro-Chem Ltd. makes insecticidal soaps from the fatty acids found in trees. The soaps kill insects which prey on Douglas fir, spruce, and other trees, along with fruit and vegetable crops.

Pesticide accidents decreasing

■ The average number of lethal pesticide accidents in the United States is decreasing, according to reports from the U.S. Office of Vital Statistics.

Though exact records were not kept until 1968, more than 100 annual lethal accidents were estimated during the 1950s by personnel at Vanderbilt University's Medical School. Between 1968 and 1970, 55 were reported to the National Center for Health Statistics, but between 1980 and 1982 there were just 28.

The National Center also reports that, of 4,293 lethal poisonings in 1983, just 22 were the result of agricultural chemical ingestion.

Dr. Keith C. Barrons notes the statistics are available in a pamphlet entitled "Agriculture and the Enviro-Extremists" which is published by the National Council for Environmental Balance, P.O. Box 7732, Louisville, KY, 40207.

Kikuyugrass: friend or foe?

■ Kikuyugrass is prospering in some warm-season areas but whether or not that's good is a matter of opinion. Some golf superintendents in the Los Angeles area are managing the grass with good results. Riviera Country Club is practically all kikuyugrass. Other superintendents are trying to get rid of it. It can have an extreme thatch layer and may give the golfer a bad lie if not maintained properly. Whether or not it's right for you depends on your climate and management program.

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