

Down the Garden Path

November 30, 1998

Plant & Pest Diagnostic Laboratory

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In This Issue...

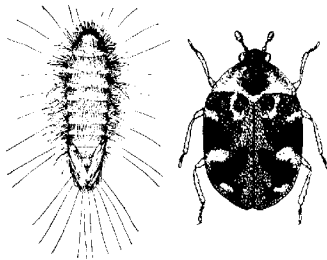
THE GRAPE VINE

- There's a Hole in my Sweater!

HOME

- Flowers Last Longer with TLC

READER SURVEY



Common Carpet Beetle

THE GRAPE VINE

There's a Hole in my Sweater!

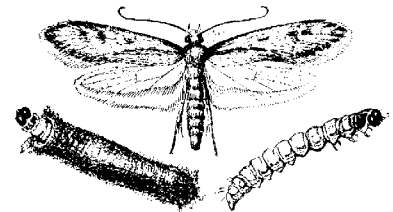
Mike Potter, *Kentucky Pest News*, November 9, 1998

With the onset of cold weather, calls about 'bugs' infesting clothing and other items unpacked from storage are common. These are probably clothes moths or carpet beetles. Besides damaging fabric, these insects will feed on any item composed of animal fibers, e.g., wool, fur, silk, feathers, felt or leather. Items commonly infested include wool sweaters, coats, blankets, carpets, down pillows and comforters, upholstered furniture, and toys. Synthetic fabrics such as polyester and rayon are rarely attacked unless blended with wool, or if they are heavily soiled with food stains or body oils. Serious infestations of clothes moths and carpet beetles can develop undetected in a home, often causing irreparable damage to clothing, bedding, rugs, and other articles.

THE CULPRITS

Carpet beetles: Larvae are about 1/8 to 1/4 inch long, tan to brownish in color, and densely covered with hairs or bristles. This is the life stage likely to be encountered now since only the larvae feed on fabrics and cause damage. Often times, only the shed (molted) skins of the larvae are present on the damaged item. Adult carpet beetles feed primarily on flowers and are usually discovered indoors during the spring. The adult beetles are small (1/16 to 1/8 inch) and oval-shaped, ranging in color from black to various patterns of white, brown, yellow and orange. Large numbers may be spotted around light fixtures and windows, indicating that an infestation is present somewhere within the structure.

Clothes moths: Clothes moths are small (1/2 inch), buff-colored moths with narrow wings fringed with hairs. Like carpet beetles, they damage fabric only in the larval stage. Adult clothes moths are seldom seen because they avoid light, preferring to hide in dark places such as closets. Tiny moths seen in the kitchen and other well-lighted areas are probably grain moths originating from stored foods, e.g., cereal, dried fruit, nuts, or pet food. Clothes moth larvae spin silken feedin tubes or patches of webbing as they move about on the surface of fabrics. They also deposit tiny fecal pellets similar in color to the fabric.



Casemaking Clothes Moth



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-- continued on next page --

THE SOLUTION

Controlling an existing fabric pest problem requires diligence and a thorough inspection to locate all infested items and areas of infestation. The source may be an old woolen scarf at the back of a closet, a fur hat in a box, an unused remnant of wool carpeting, or an abandoned bird or squirrel nest up in the attic. Larvae prefer to feed in dark, undisturbed areas where susceptible items are stored for long periods. Larvae also may be found living beneath the edges of carpeting (use needle-nose pliers to lift the edge of the carpet from the tack strip along baseboards), underneath and within upholstered furniture, or inside heat ducts and floor vents, feeding on accumulations of lint, pet hair and other bits of debris. Occasionally, infestations may originate from bird or animal nests or carcasses present in an attic, chimney or wall void. Carpet beetles, in particular, will also feed on pet food, bird seed, and cereal products.

Infested items should be laundered, dry-cleaned or thrown out. Laundering or dry-cleaning kills any eggs or larvae that may be present. Vacuuming floors, carpets, and heating vents effectively removes larvae as well as hair and lint which could support future infestations. Be sure to vacuum the edges of carpets, along baseboards, underneath furniture and stored items, and inside closets and 'quiet' areas where carpet beetles and clothes moths prefer to feed.

Insecticides applied to infested areas may be helpful as a supplement to good housekeeping. Products containing active ingredients labeled for flea control (e.g., permethrin) are effective. Sprays may be applied to carpets, especially along and beneath edges adjacent to baseboards, underneath furniture, and other likely areas of infestation where prolonged contact with humans is unlikely. Clothing and bedding should not be sprayed with household insecticides and should be removed before treatment. Before using any pesticide, read and follow label directions.

The best way to avoid future problems with fabric pests is through prevention. Woolens and other susceptible fabrics should be dry-cleaned or laundered before being stored for long periods. Cleaning kills any eggs or larvae that may be present and also removes perspiration odors that are attractive to the pests.

Articles to be stored should then be packed in tight-fitting containers with moth balls or flakes containing paradichlorobenzene (PDB) or naphthalene. The vapors from these materials are only effective if maintained at sufficient concentrations. Effective concentrations can best be achieved by sealing susceptible items (with the manufacturers' recommended dosage of moth crystals) in large plastic bags, and then storing the bagged articles in tight-fitting trunks, boxes or chests. Contrary to popular belief, cedar closets or chests are seldom effective by themselves because the seal is insufficient to maintain lethal or repellent concentrations of the volatile oil of cedar.

Conventional household insecticides should not be used to treat clothing; however, mothproofing solutions may be applied to susceptible clothing by professional dry cleaners. Valuable garments such as furs can be protected from these pests by storing them in cold vaults, a service offered by some furriers and department stores.

Elimination of widespread, persistent infestations of carpet beetles and clothes moths in a home or commercial establishment may require the services of a professional pest control operator. For additional information please refer to Purdue's Extension Publication *E-48 Clothes Moths and Carpet Beetles*, available via the internet (www.agcom.purdue.edu/AgCom/Pubs/) or from your local county Cooperative Extension Service Office. ☺

HOME

Flowers Last Longer With TLC

B. Rosie Lerner, Extension Consumer Horticulture Specialist

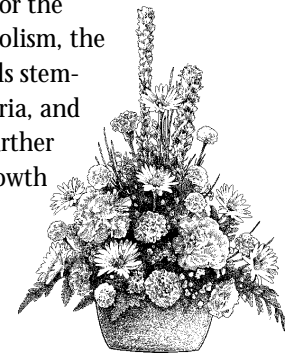
Nothing conveys warm feelings like a fresh bouquet of flowers. You can make those warm feelings last longer by giving blossoms a little extra attention.

Flowers do vary in their staying power, with mums and carnations taking the prize for longevity. Roses, orchids, tulips, and daffodils tend to fade more quickly. Choose fresh flowers that have good color and are free from spots and wilting. Flowers that are just beginning to open will outlast those that are fully open.

Cut flowers will wilt quickly without a source of water. Recut the ends of the stems and place them in water as soon as possible. If you want to hasten opening of flowers, use warm water. Freshly cut stems will absorb water more readily. When possible, recut stems daily and add fresh water. Cool temperatures promote long lasting flowers -- avoid placing arrangements near heat vents.

Ripening produce and aging flowers produce a gas known as ethylene during the maturation process. The ethylene in turn speeds up the aging process. Therefore, avoid placing flowers near ripening produce and remove older flowers as they fade.

Most florists provide floral preservative with the purchase of fresh flowers. The preservatives generally come in powder form that should be dissolved in the vase water. Commercially packaged preservatives generally include sugar, bactericide, and an acidifier. The sugar provides carbohydrate for the flowers' metabolism, the bactericide kills stem-clogging bacteria, and the acidifier further discourages growth of rotting organisms. ☺



READER SURVEY

As we near the end of 1998, and the end of another *Down the Garden Path* subscription year (1998 index issue still to come), we would like ask you, the reader, what you think about our publication. Please take a few minutes to answer the following questions pertaining to our newsletter so we may continue to provide you with the services you want and need. When completed, please separate the last page, fold, such that the return label is facing outward, tape, and return it to us (postage prepaid). It is based on your responses that we are able to make changes that will improve our publication. **Please return by December 31, 1998.** Thank you!

Please circle the most appropriate response to the statements provided.

	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>		<i>Uncertain</i>		<i>Strongly Agree</i>
1.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	1	2	3	4	5



If you have any further comments, please write them in the enclosed area on the back page.

1. I find the *Down the Garden Path* useful to me.
2. I consider the \$15 subscription fee a good value.
3. The information provided is timely.
4. I usually read all of the articles in each issue.
5. I save the issues and refer back to them as needed.
6. The graphics included with articles are useful.
7. I would prefer fewer graphics and more information.
8. The newsletter helped me recognize problems or situations in my own yard, garden, or home.
9. As a result of reading the newsletter, I have reduced the amount of pesticides I would have normally used.
10. I have saved money because of some of the information provided in the newsletter. Please give example including how much money was saved. _____
11. How would you describe yourself? (Please circle only one) **Hobbyist**
Master Gardener Extension Educator/Specialist Consultant
Garden Center Operator Landscaper Other _____
12. Do you share your *Down the Garden Path* newsletters? **Yes** **No**
 If so, How? _____
13. Where did you hear about the our newsletter? **Master Gardener Class**
County Extension Office State Fair Flower & Patio Show
Webpage Friend Other _____

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