

Don't Make Your Home Welcoming to Uninvited Fall Insect Pests

People look forward to fall for a variety of reasons. Some love the cooler temperatures, others admire the foliage color show, and some love fall's arrival because it means the holiday season is getting closer. Of all the potential reasons for looking forward to fall, I've never heard anyone say they couldn't wait for fall so they could get the bugs back in their homes! Fall's arrival signals many insect species that it's time to find a place to spend the winter. Two species common across Rutherford County consider our homes the perfect places to spend their winter vacations.



Mitchell Mote,
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First is the brown marmorated stink bug (BMSB). This critter is an invasive insect native to Japan and Asia. It is a significant agricultural pest as it will feed on and damage a wide range of crops including many fruit and vegetables. These stink bugs don't cause any structural damage or reproduce inside homes; they just congregate. They don't bite people or pets and they aren't known to transmit any disease or cause physical harm.

They do produce a pungent, malodorous chemical which they emit through their abdomens as a defensive mechanism to prevent them from being eaten by birds and lizards. However, simply handling them or attempting to move them will trigger them to release their odor which is transferred readily from one surface to another. People may notice them congregating on exterior walls and windows of homes in the late September through October time frame.

The other insect that considers a home as a perfect winter vacation destination is the multicolored Asian lady beetle (MALB). This beneficial insect (also from Asia) becomes a pest when fall weather conditions trigger their normal swarm to overwintering sites and the overwintering site they choose is your home! These lady beetles start searching for overwintering sites on the second day when temperatures are greater than 65°F after a dramatic drop in temperature, usually to near freezing. These conditions often occur in our area the last half of October.



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Anything you can do to deny these pests access to your home now will minimize the number you have to deal with inside your home later. Caulk and/or seal around potential entry points that may need tightening up. Entry points can include spaces around doors, windows, utility openings, dryer vents, etc. The space around such places may seem small, but it doesn't take a big hole for these insects to pass through.

Another measure to reduce the number of insects that enter a home is to treat roof lines or soffits and areas of vertical color contrast (such as around shutters) and outside around potential entry points such as doors and windows with an insecticide prior to them trying to move in. Insecticide products available to homeowners that contain active ingredients such as bifenthrin, permethrin, and cyfluthrin have proven to be effective in reducing the number of insects that enter a home. These products' effectiveness is approximately three weeks (it can be influenced by rain). If a homeowner decides to use an insecticide to help reduce possible home-invading insect numbers, an October application prior to the start of their migration into homes and buildings would be recommended with a follow up in three weeks. **ALWAYS** read and follow label directions when using any pesticide for any reason. Insects that do get into a home can be removed by vacuuming them with a wet/dry or shop vacuum and dumping them outside. As a note of caution, vacuuming significant quantities of stink bugs can create an odor both in the home and in the vacuum, so just be prepared with air freshener.

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