

Grasshoppers got you hoppin' mad?

August 05, 2009

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FORT STOCKTON - Grasshoppers got you hoppin' mad? If they don't yet, there's a good chance they soon will, according to a Texas AgriLife Extension Service entomologist.

"A few grasshoppers aren't much of a problem, but when abundant as they are starting to be here in far West Texas, they are some of the most difficult insect pests to control in the urban landscape," said Dr. Mark Muegge, AgriLife Extension entomologist at Fort Stockton. "That's because they are so mobile and, depending on the species, the eggs will hatch from early spring through midsummer. This seemingly endless supply of hoppers will head to town when pastures (their natural habitat) dry up."

Muegge said there are many grasshopper species in Texas, but only a few cause problems. Two of the more common trouble-makers in far West Texas are the red legged and Lakins grasshoppers. The duo are similar in size and shape, but their colors differ slightly. During outbreak years, they can wreak havoc on alfalfa, wheat, vegetables and ornamental flowers.

"Can homeowners get rid of grasshoppers? During outbreak years like this one is shaping up to be in some parts of the state, I'd have to say no," Muegge said. "But homeowners can minimize their damage by implementing Integrated Pest Management practices. These often include physical barriers, insecticides and landscape plants grasshoppers don't particularly care for."

Muegge said it's obvious homeowners have little control of what goes on outside their landscape, but they can take a big step in protecting their yards by eliminating weedy margins around the home which offer prime egg-laying sites.

Insecticides are another option that can provide some immediate control. Muegge said recent tests have shown that products with bifenthrin provide the fastest kill and longest residual control. Products containing permethrin and esfenvalerate should also work well.

Baits are another option homeowners might consider, said Muegge. Baits consist of wheat bran combined with the insecticide carbaryl or the natural grasshopper pathogen *Nosema locustae*.

"Baits are designed to selectively kill only grasshoppers and other foraging insects and therefore will be less harmful to off-target organisms," Muegge said.

Some common grasshopper-resistant plants include American beautyberry, artemesia, Coralberry, crape myrtle, Dwarf yaupon, Afghan pine, Lantana, Moss rose, Nandina, Purslane, *Salvia greggii* and Turks cap.

For more information on control measures and for a more complete list of grasshopper-resistant landscape plants, see: <http://citybugs.tamu.edu/FastSheets/Ent-1040.html> and search for grasshoppers.

-30-

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