



# White County Horticulture

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## Stinkbugs

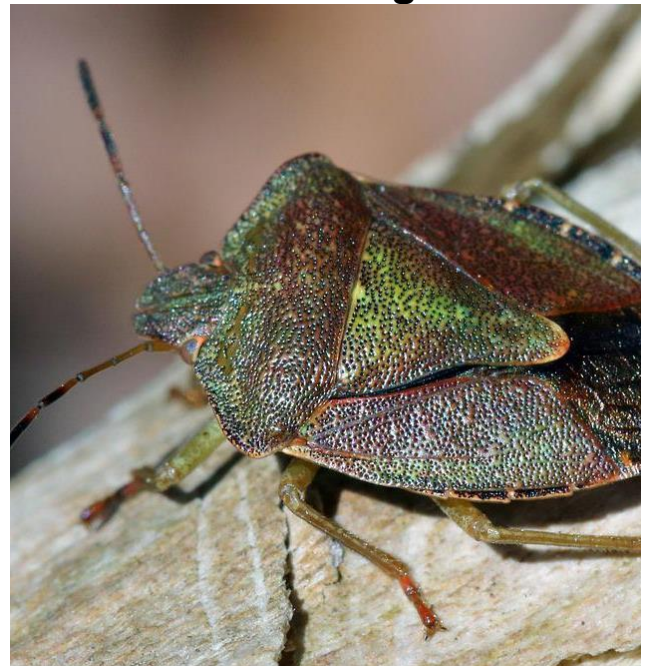
Stinkbugs are insect pests which feed on a wide range of plants, including fruits, vegetables and ornamentals. Stinkbugs range in color from brown to brilliant green, although many have a dull shade designed to blend in with the plants they are feeding on. Nearly all species are distinguished by a triangle-or shield-shaped plate on their backs. Stinkbugs are part of an order of insects sometimes called "true bugs," which do not chew with their mouths; instead, they have a piercing/sucking mouthpart that allows them to suck the sap out of what they are feeding on. There are multiple generations per year. Females typically lay eggs in a cluster on the surface of the leaf. (The related squash bug, lays her eggs on the undersurface of the leaf.) The eggs hatch in about a week, and the nymphs look like tiny adults, and take about four weeks to reach maturity.

At night, they are attracted to light and therefore can sometimes be seen flying around outdoor lights. Often, they hang around some of their favorite host plants, especially tomatoes, melons, and beans. When they feed on tomatoes and peaches, they can create ugly scars called "catfacing."

## Controlling stinkbugs in gardens

Stinkbugs can be difficult to control because they are resistant to some insecticides and the later in the season it is, the tougher they are to kill. Scout your garden and if you see the egg clusters, rub them off. You can trap the adults by placing melon rinds in the garden overnight. The insects will congregate under them to feed, and you can dispose of them in the morning. Be aware that they are aptly named. When disturbed or killed they can give off a noxious odor.

## Stinkbug



## Sweet Corn Demo Update



My sweet corn demo is begging for help this year...lack of pollination and drought conditions are impossible to overcome. Thanks to Smith Family Farms for being our cooperator.

## August Garden Calendar

Staying indoors and enjoying the air conditioning sounds appealing when heat indexes are over 100 degrees, but there are gardening chores that can be done, and unbelievably August is the time to begin planting a fall vegetable garden. You can plant both cool season and warm season crops now. Plant peppers, tomatoes and squash for a fall harvest and mid-month cool season transplants of broccoli, cabbage and the like will start arriving. You can also seed greens,

green beans, and lettuce later in the month. Water and mulch will be vitally important to get these new vegetables established this time of year!

If you have been watering your summer vegetable garden, you should still be harvesting. Peppers, eggplants and okra are plentiful in many gardens now. Tomatoes may be a bit slow right now. When daytime temperatures are above 95 or nighttime temperatures are above 75 degrees, tomatoes take a siesta. Ripening is slowed down and new tomatoes are slow to set. If your plants are still healthy, keep watering and once the weather evens out (fingers crossed) they should begin to bear again.

This summer has been a good trial for many of our summer annuals. Which plants are doing well in your garden, and which aren't? Annual vinca or periwinkle looks amazing in many gardens, and I am duly impressed with Sunpatiens. Lantana, pentas and zinnias are also thriving in full sun in this heat. If you have been watering, your common impatiens are doing well in the shade and the Dragonwing begonias look good too. If your plants have slowed down in their blooming, check your nutrition. Annual flowers like fertilizer and as much as we have watered or gotten rain, nutrients do leach out. Use caution when fertilizing when it is extremely hot and dry, or you can burn your plants. Use regular light applications and water it in well and your flowers should come back.

For all-summer blooming perennials and shrubs, know whether they set seeds or are self-cleaning and drop spent flowers. If your plants are trying to set seeds you will be in the seed business and not the bloom business. Deadhead the spent blooms to direct energy away from seed set and into more blooms. Plants that benefit from regular deadheading are coneflowers (Echinacea), blanket flower (gaillardia),



coreopsis and black-eyed Susan (rudbeckia). Summer spirea, some butterfly bushes (buddleia) roses and crape myrtles will also rebloom if you cut off spent flowers.



For all our talk on watering annuals, vegetables, and containers, don't forget about your spring blooming trees and shrubs now either. I have already seen new flower buds for next spring on camellias, tulip magnolias and dogwoods. More will be setting on other spring blooming trees and shrubs from now through September. If they get too stressed or dry, they won't set as many buds. Encore or repeat blooming azaleas are beginning to produce new blooms now and should continue through fall. No more pruning should be done to any spring blooming plants—including the reblooming azaleas. Treat them just like spring bloomers and only prune after bloom in the spring. For now, all that you do is monitor water needs for all spring blooming plants. No more fertilization or pruning is needed.

Tropical flowering plants are in their element with this heat and humidity, but they do like a little water and some fertilizer. Regular fertilization will keep them blooming for another two to three months. You may also be able to find some good bargains on summer tropical plants at area nurseries now, so if you need a boost in color, go shopping. They do well in containers or planted in the ground, but if growing in containers, the bigger the better to help you

keep them watered. Small pots dry out very quickly these days, especially in full sun.

## As Drought Lingers, Trees Require Smarter Approaches for Watering



**DISTRESSED** -- A young tree shows signs of drought distress. (Division of Agriculture photo/Krista Quinn)

With Arkansas' prolonged drought taking a toll on trees across the state, now is the time for homeowners to lend some extra attention to their trees that may be in distress.

"People have been calling about their trees losing leaves or starting to get their fall colors way too early, or the bark cracking," said Krista Quinn, a certified arborist and an agricultural agent with the Cooperative Extension Service's Faulkner County office,

part of the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture. “These are all signs of drought distress.”

The prolonged lack of rain and high temperatures across Arkansas has depleted moisture from soil in many areas.

“The two best things we can do to minimize drought damage to trees is to water them and lightly mulch them,” Quinn said. “Watering and mulching trees now may not be enough to get them to produce new leaves or start growing again this season, but it can minimize damage and make them better able to withstand other environmental and pest pressures during the coming year.”

Older trees require hundreds of gallons of water over a week, but their root systems can tap into deeper water sources that younger trees cannot access. Younger trees, especially those in harsh urban conditions, need extra care.

“Turf grasses can usually recover,” Quinn said. “They will go dormant and turn brown. Some trees will also go dormant as a strategy for dealing with drought, so just because it’s defoliating doesn’t mean it’s dying, but it is stressed.”

Homeowners may face time or financial constraints when it comes to caring for their landscaping. Some municipalities may also request that homeowners reduce water use for irrigation like sprinklers and landscape watering to maintain the community water supply.

“For anyone who is trying to maintain their landscape through drought and heat and feel like they have to make decisions — I honestly think trees are the priority,” Quinn said. “They’re expensive to plant, and large trees are irreplaceable. The hot temperatures make us appreciate the shade from a tree even more.”

## **Tree Watering Tips**

- Water under the entire tree canopy and not just at the trunk.
- For newly planted trees, water the area just outside the root zone to encourage roots to grow out away from the trunk into the native soil.
- Irrigate infrequently, but deeply.
- Watering once a week is usually sufficient as long as the top four to six inches of soil is wetted. Dig a small hole after watering to make sure the water has percolated through the soil.
- Watering trees in clay soils, compacted soils, or on slopes can be difficult since the water often starts to runoff before the top four to six inches of soil is wetted. Use a soaker or drip irrigation system to apply a low volume of water over a longer amount of time. Another option is to cycle the water flow on and off every 20 to 30 minutes. Water for 20 minutes, then let the water soak into the slope for 20 minutes, then water again for 20 minutes until the needed amount of water has soaked into the soil.
- Water in the evening or early morning to minimize evaporation.
- Use sprinklers, soaker hoses, watering bags, and buckets to water trees.
- Newly planted trees have a better chance of surviving if they are watered during dry spells for the first two years after planting.

## **Tree Mulching Tips**

- Apply a two- to four-inch-deep layer of mulch over tree roots.

- Keep mulch material away from the tree trunk. The goal is to keep the tree roots moist and the trunk dry.
- Mulch as much of the area under the tree as possible, preferably to the outermost edge of the tree's canopy.
- Many different organic products can be used as mulch. Bark, shredded wood, grass clippings, straw, pine needles, and dried leaves are all good options.
- Mulch does not need to be reapplied every year.
- Having a mulch layer more than about 4 inches deep can harm trees.

## **Blister Beetles Take on White County**

Blister beetles are everywhere! They're in hay fields, yards, porches, vegetable gardens, wooded areas - some folks describe it as their yard is pulsating with them!

Jon Zawislak, Apiculture and Urban Entomologist, shared the following with me: The striped blister beetle, *Epicauta vittata* are a native species with a preference for a wide range of host plants, but are particularly fond of solanaceous vegetables (potato, tomato, peppers, eggplant). They have a greater preference for foliage than other beetle pests, are relatively large and can have voracious appetites. Adult beetles normally remain in low population densities but will appear to suddenly aggregate into large mating and feeding swarms, which is what you described.

While adults can do serious damage to plants, their larvae actually feed on grasshopper eggs, and can be considered beneficial for controlling those pests.

There are one to two generations per year. In Arkansas, the May–June or early-emerging adults go on to produce another generation in which adults emerge in September.

Maximum emergence of adults occurs in July, however, and few of the later-emerging adults contribute to the second generation. The generations overlap, resulting in many adults being present in the field from late May to late October. Adult beetles are most active during the morning and late afternoon, seeking shelter from the sun at midday. In particularly hot climates they remain inactive during the day, confining their activity to the evening hours. They are easily disturbed, dropping readily from plants, and hiding or scurrying away if disturbed. Blister beetles are easily controlled by foliar application of insecticides. The tendency of beetles to aggregate, however, may result in serious defoliation in small areas of a garden, with little or no damage elsewhere. Thus, careful visual examination of plants is suggested, followed by spot treatment of infested areas.



Some products you can use include:

- Acetamiprid 0.5% (Ortho Flower, Fruit & Vegetable Insect Killer)
- Carbaryl (Sevin)
- Cyfluthrin 0.75% (Bayer Advanced)
- Bifenthrin 0.3% + zeta-cypermethrin 0.075% (Ortho Bug-G-Gon Insect Killer for Lawns and Gardens)
- Gamma-cyhalothrin 0.08% (Spectracide)

Be sure to read and follow all label instructions when using any pesticide product. The label is the law!

Interesting trivia: Blister beetles are very attracted to alfalfa, and adults can congregate in great numbers in hay fields.

They produce a defensive chemical called cantharidin, which can be highly toxic to horses if these beetles end up in baled hay. The same chemical can cause blistering on human skin, so be careful handling adult beetles. Curiously, the same substance, at a low dose, was historically used as an aphrodisiac once known as "Spanish fly."

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