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Tree and Small Fruit Pest Management

Most tree and small fruits are successful in north Idaho. However, with any crop there are pests that occasionally cause problems. Here is a short summary of a few of the most important pests of tree and small fruits in north Idaho. It is a good idea to be on the lookout for these problems. Please contact the nursery for pesticide control measures.

Tree Fruits

Aphids produce sticky honeydew and possibly a black fungus called sooty mold. Leaves often curl. Aphids are often controlled by natural predators. If control is needed, avoid the use of broad spectrum insecticides. If practical, wash the insects off the plant.

Western cherry fruit fly emerges when the cherry turns from green to yellow in color. Apply recommended insecticides at this time and every 7 days until harvest.

Apple and thorn skeletonizer is an adult moth with a wingspan of half an inch and larvae that are half an inch long that skeletonize and roll apple leaves. It is important to control this pest early as the insect is difficult to control once leaves roll.

Spider mites tend to build by mid to late summer and thrive in dusty conditions. Wash dust off leaves and avoid tree stress. Prune and destroy infected shoots. Avoid overfertilization. Prune for good air circulation.

Pear slug skeletonizes leaves and is actually the larva of a sawfly. Heavy infestations will cause leaf drop. Pick off or squash larvae or wash them off with water.

Fire blight is a serious bacterial disease of pear that overwinters in the cankers (sunken areas) of apple and pear trees. Bacteria enter blossoms and at 65 F or higher plus a bit of rain infection takes place by affecting current years' growth. Prune out 18 inches below affected areas as soon as possible.

Peach leaf curl is a fungal disease that causes peach leaves to turn yellowish to orange and causes leaves to become thick and rubbery and may be covered with white spores. Remove and destroy infected leaves or shoots as soon as symptoms appear.

Scale produces sticky honeydew similar to aphids and can reduce vigor of twigs and branches. Scale can be removed using a plastic pot scrubber. Prune out branches that are heavily infested.

Bacterial canker can be seen as elliptical slightly sunken areas on the branches or trunk with a brown discoloration and possibly some gumming. Never prune in the rain or when rain is predicted within a week. Remove infected branches 12 inches below the infection. Disinfect pruning tools with rubbing alcohol or bleach between cuts.

Coryneum blight or shothole fungus can cause twig cankers, dead gummy buds, and spots on leaves and fruit. Prune for good air circulation and to destroy dead buds and cankered twigs.

Powdery mildew is a gray white fungus that looks like a powder coating on leaves. It is most severe in warm, dry conditions. However, the disease is initiated in crowded plantings where humidity is high. Avoid late summer applications of nitrogen fertilizer and overhead watering. Remove plant debris at the end of the season. Prune overcrowded plant material.

Small Fruits

Blueberry leafroller adults are buff colored with a 0.5-0.75 inch wingspan with a dark band across its wings. The larvae are 0.5-1 inch long and have dark green bodies with dark brown to black heads. The larvae roll and tie leaves together with silk for feeding and shelter. Eggs are green and laid in a cluster of 200. Damage can be seen in early spring. Remove dropped leaves and avoid the use of broad spectrum insecticides which can disrupt natural enemies.

Blueberry root weevil adults are 0.2-0.5 inches long and reddish brown to black. Adult feeding causes characteristic notching of leaves. This feeding damage is minor, but they may contaminate fruit. Larvae feeding on roots can cause stunting and poor yields in plants. Hand pick and destroy adults when found. Contact the nursery for pesticide recommendations.

Cane maggots are the larvae of a small fly, are legless and feed on the inside of the cane. Larvae feed in a downward direction when new canes are 1 to 3 feet long, causing them to droop. Canes may show a swelling where feeding is occurring. Remove and burn affected canes as soon as the damage is seen. There is no chemical control for this pest.

Lygus bug adults are oval shaped 4 mm long with a light yellow "V" on the back. These bugs feed on developing leaves, buds and fruit, which kills the tissue around the feeding site. Eliminate weeds that serve as protection and early season food for the insect.

Raspberry crown borer larvae bores into and damages the lower canes and crowns of most cane berry species as well as wild thimbleberry and salmonberry. The adult is a clear-winged moth with a yellow and black striped body that looks like a yellow jacket. The larvae are white with a brown head; when mature they can be up to 38 mm long. Canes may break off at ground level. Look for brittle, hollow canes when tying up canes in the spring. Dig out and burn infested canes and crowns in the fall. Remove other hosts, such as wild blackberries, from the area.

Spider mites are 2-3 mm long, have eight legs and are light tan or greenish with a dark spot on each side. Mite feeding may cause leaves to turn brown and drop prematurely, and webbing may be present. Warm temperatures and dusty conditions favor mite populations. Mites can be hosed off plants. Use selective pesticides.

Stink bugs are large, bright green, shield shaped and flattened. They have a foul odor and may contaminate berries at harvest.

Thrips are about the size of spider mites and are slender with fringed wings. They are often found in blossoms and suck out the contents of cells. Injured blossoms often turn into distorted fruit. Flowers may have brown streaks or spots.

Yellowjackets are worst when spring weather is warm and dry. Find nests and treat with aerosol sprays according to directions, or place traps in the vicinity.

Mike Bauer is the Horticulturist for Moose Valley Farms, a full-service garden center located in Naples at mile marker 495. For more information on this subject, attend our class on Friday, July 31 at 10 am at the garden center. Please feel free to call us at 267-5108 or stop in if you have any questions.