

THE BUG LADY

ADDING POWER TO YOUR PEST CONTROL PROGRAMS

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INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT PRIMER

INTERIORSCAPE is proud to introduce Suzanne Wainwright Evans as our Entomological Science Correspondent. With extensive experience in pest control management, Evans is a valuable addition to our "Biz Know-How" columnist lineup.

There is no "silver bullet" for pest problems. You can't just spritz a plant with a chemical or open a jar of beneficial insects and expect your problems to be solved. Effective pest management requires an organized thought process that has to be considered *before* you have a pest problem. This is the foundation of Integrated Pest Management (IPM).

IPM is the practice of long-term prevention and suppression of pests. Several tools are commonly used, including scouting, the use of resistant varieties of plants and cultural practices. Pesticides are only used when pest pressures have reached an unacceptable level for the situation, and even then products are selected that are environmentally responsible.

Initial Prevention

It is well known that when a plant is grown in optimal conditions, it is less likely to have insect and disease problems, but why is this true?

Plants that don't receive enough light can't properly photosynthesize, and in turn, don't produce enough food and allelochemicals for the plant to stay healthy. (Allelochemicals are compounds produced naturally by a plant that protect it from natural enemies.)

This lack of light is called a stress factor. Two things can cause stress factors - a lack of essential resources or an inability to use those resources. The more stress factors you have, the greater the chances of pest problems.

So you try to do it right: adequate light, proper watering and good nutritional practices. Despite your best efforts, somehow "poof!" like magic, "they" appear in the middle of the night.

It is not magic. It's possible that the insects came in on the plant hiding in a leaf fold or in the soil. A neighboring plant sustaining the pest without signs of damage may be the culprit. Insects and mites can also move on wind currents, clothing and tools, so these could be other possible sources.

This is why scouting your plants and keeping records of pests is so important. Keeping records can be a long-term benefit as many pests tend to appear the same time each year. Record-keeping lets you know if pests survive a control method. If the control method didn't work, you are better equipped to analyze



Which pest is it? Knowing this is crucial to pest management. For example, this Apopka weevil feeds on ornamental nursery plants.

the situation and decide if the problem was poor timing, poor application or pesticide resistance in the pest population.

Always Analyze

Once a pest problem is discovered, the first thing to do is take a step back and analyze the situation.

Is this plant worth the time and money it would take to save it? Don't spend a dollar to save a dime. If your answer is no, get rid of it soon!

Are the plants stressed? Be sure to correct stress factors.

What is the pest? And on what type of plant?

It is essential to know what pest you have. Just saying you have mealybugs is not good enough. Different mealybugs have different life cycles, and this will make a difference in how you manage them. This is true with most insects and mites, especially if you are considering using biological control.

How do you identify them? Your local county extension agency, professional analytical lab or private consultant are excellent sources. Once the pest is identified, research your options. With the recent removal of many pesticides from the market, selecting your control method becomes more difficult for the interiorscape professional.

In upcoming issues of *INTERIORSCAPE Magazine*, I will address specific pest issues and discuss control methods. But no one knows your pest problems better than you. E-mail ideas and suggestions to buglady@interiorscape.com. ■



A healthy root ball is a good sign pests are under control.

Entomological Science Correspondent Suzanne Wainwright-Evans is an Ornamental Entomologist specializing in pest management programs. She has been involved in the green industry for more than 10 years. Her primary focus is biological control.