

Boxelder Bugs

The western boxelder bug is found almost everywhere boxelder trees grow. They have been observed on other trees as well, including pear, ash, and maple. They feed primarily on the pistillate or seed-bearing trees by sucking sap from the leaves, tender twigs, and developing seeds. **The plant damage is not considered important, and the bugs are much better known as a source of annoyance to home owners** because of their habit of congregating in large numbers in or on the outside of houses in autumn, when adults are seeking hibernation quarters.

These insects can be controlled inside the home by collecting them with a tank-type vacuum cleaner and destroying them. Another control method consists of spraying a pesticide on foundations, fences, or other outside areas where bugs congregate in the late summer and fall. If they gain entrance to houses, they do not harm clothing, foods, or other household articles.

Overwintering adults leave their hibernating quarters with the warm spring weather and begin laying red eggs in crevices of the bark and on other objects in the vicinity of the host plant. An oil spray applied at this time will suffocate eggs and decrease insect numbers. Hatching occurs in about 14 days. Spraying infested trees with a pesticide in June while nymphs are present also will reduce bug populations. New adults appear in July and begin laying eggs that result in a second generation by early autumn.

No endorsement of named products is intended, nor is criticism implied of similar products that are not mentioned. Pesticides are poisonous. Always read and carefully follow all label instructions for safety, use and disposal given on the container label.



Photo from University of California Extension

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<http://cals.arizona.edu/yavapai>

Adapted from Insect Pests of Farm, Garden and Orchard (Davidson & Lyon, 1987)