Are Bugs Bugging You?

Have you had problems with insect infestations in your home this year? Have you wondered what they are and where they all come from? Insects are like us in their need for shelter, food and water. By removal of one or more of these factors you will achieve some control of the problem. Integrated Pest Management (IPM) incorporates not only cultural means, such as sanitation, but also other non-chemical as well as chemical means.

- Shelter – Clean up areas that may provide harborage, and remember that insects do not need a lot of room to hide and live. Check bags, boxes and other packaging for signs of insects. Inspect areas where insects can enter your home and seal with caulk, such as around where pipes and wiring entering the house. Openings as small as the thickness of a dime can provide access. Be sure window and door screens are tight fitting and in good repair. Inspect around windows and doorframes for cracks.

- Food – Clean up food from sinks and counters. Crumbs on floors and countertops can provide a banquet for insects. Keep your refrigerator, stove and other kitchen appliances clean. Dispose of garbage in containers with tight lids. Pet food can be another food source for insects, so remove uneaten food after feeding pets and store any leftovers in sealed containers.

- Water – Clean up spills as a very small amount is all insects need. Repair any leaking water or drain lines. Do not allow water to accumulate in containers outside the home.

Other important steps to help with pest control include:

1. Identification – Knowing the identity of the insect will help in developing control methods. Learn about the insect, its life cycle and its damage characteristics. If you are in doubt, collect a few of the insects, put them into a sealable container with alcohol and take it to the local county Extension office. They will send the samples to the Clemson Plant Problem Clinic, which will provide identification and control methods. There is a $10.00 fee for this service.

2. Monitor – Check for the presence of insects and their damage.

3. Decision making – Now that you know what the insect is and what they are doing, what should be done to control them? Is the damage at a tolerable level? If not, do you use a non-chemical control or a chemical control?

4. Intervention – Which ever control measure is to be taken, make sure that it matches the insect’s life stage. Non-chemical methods can be as simple as handpicking, using a fly swatter or vacuum cleaner, or basic sanitation, baits, or traps. The use of chemicals for control should be the last step taken, and may not even be required. Use the least toxic insecticide available to control the pest inside your home. Read and
follow all label instructions. Remember the label is the law.

5. Record keeping – Keep track of the methods used to control the insects and their effectiveness for future reference.