

TOM'S GARDEN

BLOG OCTOBER 2023

Brown Marmorated Stinkbug

If you are like me, you have noticed stinkbugs this fall clinging to screens and doors trying to get inside each time we enter.

Stinkbugs were “accidentally” introduced from Asia in the 1990s. Stinkbugs can destroy some small orchard and other crops, but they only pose a nuisance in homes. They become a nuisance pest of homes because they are attracted to the outside of homes on warm fall days in search of protected overwintering sites and can enter homes in large numbers. This bug was first collected in Allentown, (Eastern Pennsylvania) in 1998. It has since spread throughout most of Eastern and Western North America.



Adults emerge in late spring, mate, and deposit eggs from May through August. The eggs hatch and go through 5 molts before maturing. Adults begin to search for overwintering spots starting in September and continuing through October. The stinkbug feeds on fruits such as apples,

pears, peaches, mulberries, and citrus fruits.

The stinkbug will not reproduce inside structures or cause damage.

If they are crushed or sucked into a vacuum cleaner, they can have an offensive odor.

The best method for keeping stinkbugs from entering your home is to seal all cracks with a good quality caulk. Damaged screens on doors and windows should be replaced and the weather stripping repaired. Of course, you must “shoo” them away from doors before entering.

It is not advisable to use insecticides inside the home after bugs have come in. Spray insecticides, directed into cracks and crevices, will not prevent them from coming in. Sealing the cracks around ceiling light fixtures, fans, and door and window trim is the only way to keep them out, especially if they are in the attic.

Pesticides are poisonous to people and pets. Read and follow directions and safety precautions on the labels.

Quick Tips for Bird Feeding

Feeding birds is an excellent way to observe and connect with local wildlife all year long. The flashes of color- blue, red, gray, black, and white are a wonderful addition to the landscape. Regardless of age, all members of a household can be involved in feeding and watching the bird species visiting your backyard and making it home.

Start small

Bird feeding can be complicated, but it doesn't have to be that way. Start with one bird feeder and one food type. A tube

feeder or small hopper feeder filled with black oil sunflower seeds is a good place to start. Other feeder types can be added later.

Pick the Right Spot

Put the feeder where you can easily see it and enjoy the activity, typically outside a living room, dining room or kitchen window. The feeder can be close to the house or further out in the yard. Window feeders are very popular for a close-up view. Birds like to have trees or shrubs nearby for a landing spot and protection from predators.

Prepare for Animal Visitors

Feeders should be placed 6 feet above ground level with an 8-foot radius from other obstacles and at least 10 feet below overhanging branches. A baffle is helpful to keep squirrels, raccoons, and chipmunks away. Safflower seeds can be used in place of sunflower seeds as animals don't like them as well.

Fall Leaves- Don't Toss Them Out

When the leaves finally fall, after enjoying all the beautiful colors, consider recycling them into mulch or compost rather than putting them out by the curb or in the trash.

Leaves are a benefit to gardens and lawns because they contain nutrients that can be released back into the soil, thereby reducing the need for fertilizers. Pound for pound, tree leaves have more minerals than manure. Leaves also break up hard soil and help them retain moisture. Leaves break down faster if they are shredded or chopped by a chipper or by running over them with a mulching mower.

Put these leaves directly on the ground

around your plants or in a compost bin to use for compost in the spring. Grass likes finely chopped leaves left on the lawn. The leaves will keep soil temperatures lower during summer's heat and retain moisture, so you won't have to water as often. They are also a good mulch for preventing weeds and if shredded or chopped, won't blow away.

Here We Go Again—Garlic

Plant garlic this fall, and you will be happy next summer! I like to plant garlic in late October to mid-November. It's better to plant too late than too early. As long as the soil isn't frozen, you can plant it. That goes for tulips and daffodils, also.

I don't like to get much top growth before winter arrives, so that is why I plant late. Plant garlic "pointy end up", you knew that! Mulch the bed to help retain moisture and eliminate freezing and thawing cycles. Garlic doesn't have to be planted all in one bed. It deters some garden pests such as aphids and whiteflies so plant it among your flowers and veggies.

Softneck varieties have the longest shelf life, 10 to 12 months. This is the type you see braided and what you will typically see in grocery stores. Hardneck grows better in northern climates but stores for only 4 to 6 months. Hardneck has a somewhat sharper and stronger taste. I peel and freeze hardneck to store and use all year long.

An old garlic expert I know with deep roots to Europe once told me: "Your fingers should get cold when planting garlic."

Debunking an Old Myth

The claim that coffee grounds placed around plants will boost plant growth has been around for a long time.

Claims are that coffee grounds are a rich source of nitrogen and will lower the PH of soils and are especially good for rose bushes.

It sounds like a great idea for recycling a waste product into something useful to use as a free organic fertilizer. In reality, it is probably doing the exact opposite.

Coffee grounds, even after brewing, are still a rich source of caffeine. This compound is produced by coffee bushes, in part, as a herbicide to suppress growth of smaller competing plants. This is called “allelopathy” and is a strategy that evolved to help reduce competition for light, space, water, and nutrients. Walnut trees produce this type of compound.



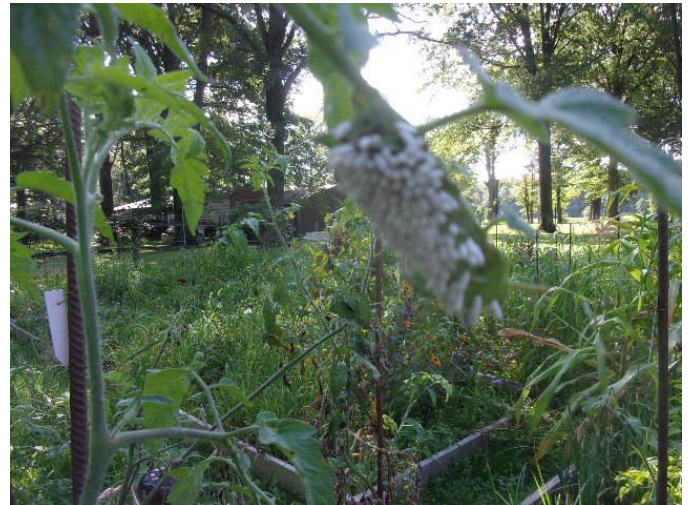
Leaching out of the coffee grounds, the highly soluble caffeine has been repeatedly shown to severely stunt the growth of smaller neighboring plants roots and slash the rate of seed germination. Coffee grounds have been used in Brazil as an herbicide and tea leaves, which contain caffeine, are used on tea plantations in Vietnam.

After a while, the accumulated caffeine in the soil reaches levels that affect the growth of mature coffee bushes. I prefer to put my

coffee grounds in the compost bin where they are not so concentrated.



Monarch caterpillar



Parasitic wasp babies on a Tomato hornworm.



Tomato hornworm

