

A GOOD YEAR FOR BOXELDER BUGS
By Diana Alfuth, Horticulture Educator
Pierce County UW-Extension

While the hot dry weather hasn't been good for our lawns and landscapes, it does seem to have been good for some of our common insects. With this year's hot dry summer, some insect species are flourishing.

Boxelder bugs are about $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch long, black in color with red lines on their body and wing margins. During summer, they feed on the leaves, flowers and seedpods of boxelders and sometimes silver maples, causing only minor damage to the trees.

This year, even though it's only August, we've been seeing Boxelder Bugs in a wide variety of places—in flower beds, in lawns, and walking across driveways and roads! Bumper crops of boxelder bugs are common in dry years because wet weather promotes a fungal disease that attacks these insects and keeps their populations lower.

Adult boxelder bugs lay their eggs on trees in spring. The eggs hatch in 11 to 14 days into nymphs that resemble the adults, but are smaller and have more red on their bodies. The nymphs develop into adults, lay eggs, and a second generation of adults is active in late summer and fall. Warm weather speeds the development of most things in nature, including insects.

Because boxelder bugs are not harmful, how you deal with them is a personal choice. Removing all female boxelder trees in an area will prevent breeding, but that isn't always practical. You can distinguish between female and male boxelder trees because only the female trees produce seeds. The seeds are hanging in clumps, and will often remain there throughout winter. Caulking windows and doors and otherwise eliminating access points will reduce the number of boxelder bugs, ladybugs, and other insects from getting into the house.

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Once the insects are inside, using a vacuum is effective. Boxelder bugs are also susceptible to soapy water. Mixing a 4% solution of liquid soap and water and spraying it on the insects will usually kill them.

Another option is to hire a professional to apply insecticides to the sides of your home. If you choose to spray yourself, be sure to test your product ahead of time to be sure you don't stain your siding. Insecticidal soaps, or products containing permethrin, cyfluthrin or esfenvalerate are all effective on boxelder bugs.

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