

Boxelder Bug

Boisea trivittata

Description:

Immature stages – The eggs are red/orange, and are most often found on the leaves, and cracks and crevices in the bark of female boxelder and silver maple trees. Immatures are wingless, bright red and black.

Adult stages – Adults are 1/2 to 5/8 inch, with red eyes, and are black with three red/orange stripes on the thorax, a red/orange line along each side, and a diagonal red/orange line on each wing.

Biology:

Life Cycle – Eggs are usually laid on the bark of female boxelder or silver maple trees, among others. The nymphs, which begin to hatch around June, have sucking mouthparts and feed by extracting juices from trees. Boxelder bugs feed and grow until midsummer when they develop into the adults which lay eggs for the second brood. Although large numbers of boxelder bugs can sometimes be observed on host plants, their feeding causes no appreciable damage to trees. When fall temperatures begin to drop, adults search for protected places to overwinter, such as houses and other buildings, in cracks or crevices in walls, doors, under windows and around foundations, particularly on south and west exposures.

Structural Nuisance Pest:

Boxelder bugs are primarily a nuisance pest, annoying residents by crawling on exteriors and inside dwellings on warm fall and winter days. They also may stain draperies and other light-colored surfaces and produce an unpleasant odor when crushed, but these are not major problems. They do not reproduce during this period. They may attempt to feed on house plants but do not cause any damage. They are not dangerous, and only on rare occasions have been reported to bite humans.

Management:

If only one or two trees of no particular value seem to be the source of boxelder bug problems their removal might prove best for long-term boxelder bug control. But remember that bugs can fly in from elsewhere in a neighborhood. Therefore, wholesale cutting of boxelder bug infested trees is not recommended. When bugs begin to congregate on building exteriors, these areas may be sprayed with residual insecticides. It is important to ensure window and door screens are intact and that doorsweeps are installed properly. If bugs get inside the best solution is to vacuum them. If bugs die inside walls or in attics their carcasses can accumulate and attract other insects that eat them, especially carpet beetles.



Eggs



Nymphs and Adults



Adults Congregating on House Siding