

NORTH SHORE JOURNAL

Friday, August 23, 2019

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Christine Mallory, Editor

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Spotted Wing Drosophila Challenges Berry Growers to Adapt

By Kitty Mayo

A very little fly is creating big problems for fruit growers, and it goes by the name of spotted wing drosophila (SWD). In very short order it has become the most damaging invasive pest of fruit crops in Minnesota.

We are all familiar with the average pesky fruit fly that feeds on fruit already past its prime, but the drosophila has a different tack. It punctures berries at any stage of ripeness to deposit its eggs that hatch into tiny, white worms that feed on the fruit from the inside.

First found in Minnesota in 2012, the fly has been making its way northward, and is beginning to impact fruit growers in the northern part of the state.

Shary Zoff, of Shary's Berries pick-your-own organic berry farm outside of Two Harbors, says that she has found SWD in her raspberries, but not her blueberries.

"It's possible to cope with picking just-ripe raspberries, and keeping them picked. Customers have been very happy with their raspberries and keep right on picking," said Zoff.

An invasive species of insect originating in Asia, drosophila can do major damage to raspberries if not managed. Some growers are finding damaged crops among strawberries, cherries, and blueberries. In addition to causing direct damage to fruit through feeding, SWD also can spread fungal infections between plants.

Cutting into pick-your-own berry season, and hitting growers' financially, there is no one thing that can rid a berry crop of the SWD. Insecticides are only effective against the adult flies, and have no effect on eggs or larvae that are already present, and can also harm honey bees and other desirable pollinators.

With no natural predators in the region, and up to eight generations of drosophila produced during just one summer season, berry growers have to be vigilant to stay on top of the bug.

The University of Minnesota Extension office is estimating that invasion by the drosophila has been so damaging that it has caused upwards of 20 percent of Minnesota berry growers to plow under their plants since 2012.



The Spotted Wing Drosophila. (flickr.com)

Lola Berry Farm in Wrenshall does pick-your-own raspberries and blueberries, and is using experimental traps, keeping fields clean of overripe fruit, and applying an organic minty insecticide to good effect in managing SWD.

As disturbing as it may be for those of us unaccustomed to dining on insects, fruit infested with the SWD eggs and larvae are safe to eat. However, fruit that looks prime upon picking can deteriorate on your counter as eggs can still hatch after harvesting, leaving behind 1/8 inch long maggots. Best to pop freshly picked and uneaten berries in the fridge, or the freezer which will stop the process.

Researchers around the country and at the University of Minnesota continue to work on finding the best solutions, for the time being the best control of the pest takes a multi-pronged approach.

- Harvest fruit as early and often
- Do not compost fruit infested with SWD, and clean up fallen fruit from under plants
- Do not bury SWD infested material, not only can it survive up to 18 inches underground, below the surface conditions are optimal for SWD
- Exclusion has been shown to have some level of effectiveness: netting or high tunnels can be used.
- Traps for the adult SWD can be home-made using apple cider vinegar, or purchased. Recommended by Extension is the Scentry Trap: <https://www.greatlakesipm.com/>.
- Insecticides, some of them organic, can reduce numbers of adult SWD early in the season. However, caution should be used in applying these chemicals with applications best in the early morning hours, or evening when SWD are most active and pollinators least active. Insecticide resistance is a concern with all of the chemicals that affect SWD.

For details on identifying, monitoring, trapping and mitigating SWD, go to: <https://extension.umn.edu/yard-and-garden-insects/spotted-wing-drosophila>.

Two Harbors Golf Course Vandalized

By Kitty Mayo

Last week vandalism at Lakeview National Golf Course in Two Harbors caused damage to several golf carts and the greens.

According to Ian Guzzo, golf course manager, the damage apparently occurred during the late night hours of Sunday, August 11th.

Guzzo says that he has been in conversation with the golf cart rental company to obtain estimates on the damage. Six carts were driven over a sand trap and apparently into each other, resulting in damage to tie rods and

bumpers. Four of the carts sustained significant damage that may result in them being totaled. Guzzo estimates around \$4,000 of damage was done.

Minor damage to the greens was caused, and video cameras for monitoring the grounds and equipment are being considered.

Two Harbors Police Department Assistant Chief Ken Anderson says that they are in the middle of the ongoing investigation and hope to resolve it soon.

Grit and Gratitude Bike Ride: Helmets Required, Tutus Optional

By Kitty Mayo

Two-year old Lily loves dresses (or "da-wesses"), and she has very particular tastes. According to her mom, Heather Buchholz, Lily doesn't love just any dress. She thinks the "floofiest" are the best.

At 18 months old Lily was diagnosed with a type of liver cancer (hepatoblastoma) that affects about one in a million people, most of them under the age of two.

This June Lily received a clean bill of health, and while she is cancer-free her mom is simultaneously holding her breath and rejoicing. Part of that rejoicing is finding expression through Buchholz's organizing "Grit and Gratitude", a bike ride fundraiser benefiting pediatric cancer research, and hosted by Spokengear Cyclery.

Lily turned two this June, and by all accounts is a super healthy little girl. But, just six months before that her mom found why her toddler was so quiet. As the days went by she grew very ill and endured incredibly traumatic medical procedures.

"Going into it, I didn't know if she would be able to survive the aggressive chemo, especially when they told me there had been no break throughs other than to ramp up the intensity of chemo from when there was a really poor prognosis 15 years ago. Still, as a parent, that's not what you want to hear," said Buchholz.

Thankfully, Lily rebounded

from the devastating effects of each round of chemo, and then went on to face six surgeries at Cincinnati Children's Hospital to address the cancer that had metastasized to her lungs and a tumor in her liver.

Throughout the grueling medical regimen and pain, Lily's mom kept looking for the spark that told her Lily would be okay. Asking if she wanted a dress or tutu to wear became a kind of marker for how well Lily felt.

"It's kind of her signature thing, before she was diagnosed she loved to watch her big sister (Elise, 4) put on a dress and twirl, and she'd want a skirt, too. But, she was so deconditioned and run down she would shake her head "no", it sucked the energy out of her," said Buchholz.

After a round of chemo Lily agreed to a tutu from her wardrobe, and when asked "Does it dance?", Lily managed a little twirl and smile. Five days after her liver surgery Lily was in pain and could barely stand, but she pointed to a tutu to put on and her mom knew she was still fighting.

"Now Lily has grown into a strong-willed child, and of all the dresses in her closet there are only a few that meet the mark for her with the tulle, and fluff, and glitter and sequins!," said Buchholz.

Still, living with the shadow of a threat of recurrence has brought another type of challenge.

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