

Why are Ladybugs Making Themselves at Home in Your Home?

I would like to thank the many people who are either supporting, or plan to participate in, Leadership Bibb 2008. Among them is State Representative Cam Ward of Alabaster, whose valuable insight on leadership appears prominently in this edition of the Press. If you have doubts about the value of a community leadership program, take a moment to get Rep. Ward's insights on the potential value of Leadership Bibb to our county.

With the help of the Chamber of Commerce and a number of committed individuals, we are slowly but surely filling 20 slots available. We have confirmed all of the venues, dates and times for the six Leadership sessions. In addition, several speakers and presenters are committed, including Rep. Ward. There's still time to register! For more information contact Nancy Lightsey at the Chamber of Commerce at 205-925-5222 or Extension at 205-926-3117.

As a Marengo County native and longtime Demopolis resident I cannot help but turn my thoughts toward community Christmas festivals. After all, I was intricately involved for over ten years with the Christmas on the River festival. But now that I'm in Bibb County, I'm excited to know that Brent, Centreville, West Blocton and Woodstock have their own Christmas events. There was the 3rd Annual Christmas on the Square in Centreville and the Woodstock Tour of Homes this past weekend, and parades and other festivities in West Blocton and Woodstock will take place this coming weekend. If you're like me, you may not be able to attend all of the events, but hopefully you have attended, or will attend, at least some of them. Doing so is a fun and inexpensive way to support our communities and their economies by enjoying what we have right here at home.

Finally, I want to share a portion of another column by new Home Grounds, Gardens, and Home Pests Regional Extension Agent Taylor Hatchett. Last week I shared her column on soil testing. And with a high volume of Lady Bugs and several calls about them to our office, I thought I'd share part of another column she wrote on Asian Ladybugs (which are actually beetles).

So why are the Ladybugs making themselves at home in your home? The answer is quite simple really. HEAT! As the temperature continues to drop outside they are seeking a place to curl up and spend the winter. Can you blame them? Unfortunately our bright warm houses are very appealing to them and they don't need an open door to get in. A ladybug can enter your house through a crack that is less than 1/8 of an inch wide.

The Asian ladybug (which is actually a beetle) is not normally considered a pest but rather is beneficial because it feeds on aphids. Aphids can cause severe damage to a wide variety of plants including row crops, fruit trees, and ornamentals. Some gardeners actually release ladybugs into their gardens when they have an aphid problem.

So how do you keep those ladies (and gentlemen) out? Indoors, chemical treatments are generally not recommended. However, there is truth in the saying, 'the best offense is a good defense'. Exclusion is the primary way to reduce the ladybug infestation in your home. This can be accomplished by caulking cracks along windows and doors and other entry ways. Attic vents should be sealed and screened. Tight fitting door sweeps as well as foam strips under glass sliding doors can also prevent ladybug entry. Utility openings (drier vents, cable television wiring, pipes, etc.) should be sealed

around with caulk, steel wool, or other mesh. In addition to keeping uninvited guests out these steps will also help to make your home more energy efficient. A vacuum can be used to pick up guests who are already inside but be sure to discard the vacuum bag outside when you are finished.

More information on the Asian ladybug can be found in Extension publication ANR 1079. This publication is available at the Bibb County Extension office or can be found at the Alabama Cooperative Extension System website www.aces.edu

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