Mild winter causes early surge of seasonal Boxelder bugs

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It was early May when Boxelder bugs made massive appearance last year. But the mild winter and warm weather have brought Boxelder bugs out early this year.

This weekend, I have fund clusters of massive gathering nymphs, accompanied with a few adults, on edgings of flower-beds and ground-debris under my maple tree (see photos I took on Saturday, April 20, 2012).
Yes, I do not have Boxelder trees, but they love the Maples just the same. They feed on a variety of plants, but favor Acer seeds.

Boxelder bugs have other names like Box Elder Bug, Zug Bug, or Maple Bug, and sometimes known as a garage beetle.

They are true bugs in the family Rhopalidae. They discharge a pungent and bad-tasting compound that attracts other boxelders to the spots to form large aggregations that discourage predation, a self-defense behavior. They like to aggregate in areas near their host plant (on rock, shrubs, trees, edges, and any man-made structures) while sunning themselves.

They are not agricultural pest, but their presence and their releasing of excreta can be annoying. Nuisance infestation should fade away by early June when the boxelder bugs have either died or moved back to the host trees.

As a nuisance pest, even outdoors, control is sometimes called.

The nymphs are susceptible to any toxic products. The best time to spray is, now - kill the nymphs before they develop into mature adults that product the next generation.

First consider using laundry detergents or ammonia cleaner, they offer safe, effective control then applied directly onto the insects.

The last choice is pesticides. Examples of common names of active ingredients available to the public include: bifenthrin, cyfluthrin, deltamethrin, lambda cyhalothrin, permethrin, tralomethrin. You can find the common name for a pesticide by reading the label and looking under Active Ingredients. Look for this information under Directions for Use.

Spraying or removing the seed-bearing boxelder trees in your yard is not a practical solution for boxelder bug management because adult boxelder bugs can fly up to a couple miles from food. Also, boxelder trees (as well as maple and ash) are usually common providing many potential sources of boxelder bugs.