Bugs and Blights
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New Year! New promises. New intentions. New classes.

WSU Pesticide Pre-License Certification, Recertification, and IPM classes. The schedules are now available at Extension offices in Washington or online at http://pep.wsu.edu/ . Whether you need a pesticide license or not, the pre-license classes are an excellent introduction to basic entomology, plant pathology and weed management. Recertification and IPM courses consist of advanced topics and opportunities to network.

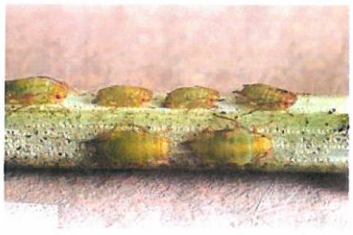
Tent Caterpillar eggs are visible on the branches in winter. The egg-masses look like bits of slate gray Styrofoam™ wrapped around twigs and smaller branches. The most common of the tent caterpillars is the western tent caterpillar, which lays eggs toward the tips of branches. In some areas, the forest tent caterpillar, which lays eggs more toward the interior on larger branches, may dominate. There are a couple other tent caterpillar species that are found on specific host plants (i.e. oaks or XXX). The northwest part of Washington was hard hit two years ago. Heavy infestations were reported from Whidbey Island, Port Townsend, and Bellingham.

Each year, tent caterpillar move about 10 miles or so. However, if moths are flying when we get a good wind from the north, the moths may be picked up by the winds and dropped along the shores of Puget Sound. Without warning, Anderson Island at the bottom of Puget Sound went from a few tent cats to severe defoliation as did Tulalip, WA. At Tulalip there were so many moths flying around the lights that they "had to sweep them off the parking lot".

Diagnostic Books are not so intimidating when you thumb through them. And winter is a great time to browse those pages of color photos. Johnson and Lyons' *Insects that Feed on Trees and Shrubs*, and its companion, *Plant Diseases of Trees and Shrubs,* or Whitney Cranshaw's *Garden Insects* each have merit as chair-side or coffee-table book where they can be browsed while sipping your beverage of choice. "What's Wrong with My Plant" by Deardorf and Wadsworth has defied the odds and built keys that are easy to follow and actually work. They also include good illustrated information on plant structure and function that won't put you to sleep.

Yellowing lawns have many causes. Because of all the media attention that has focused on European crane fly, the public presumes that any yellowing lawn is caused by crane flies. In Bellingham, WSU Master Gardeners sampled lawns suspected of having crane fly damage. Most did not have crane fly larvae in numbers large enough to cause any significant damage. To see how to sample lawn for crane flies, see http://whatcom.wsu.edu/CraneFly/faq.htm scroll down to "how do I know I have a problem with crane flies". There are other causes of yellowing of lawn areas such as perched water table or poor drainage (the lawn is squishy underfoot), buildup of thatch (spongy like memory foam), lack of nitrogen, compaction, or one of the lawn diseases.

Spruce aphid is a winter feeding species on spruce. In early February, the aphids (all females) begin to lay eggs and suck sap from needles. Needles may become banded yellow or entirely tan and drop off leaving a bare center and only the new growth at the tips. Some species of spruce are very susceptible and a few are resistant (see list and more detail on this insect. http://whatcom.wsu.edu/ag/homehort/pest/spruceaphid.htm) Begin scouting early in February and continue until you can assess the severity of attack. Place a clipboard with a white paper beneath a branch and strike the branch sharply over the board. Check for tiny, flat, green aphids. Repeat at weekly intervals.



Ken Gray Image Courtesy of Oregon State University