

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF AGAINST THE FRUIT FLY INFESTATION IN POWELL RIVER DISTRICT

Hello to Everyone on our 'Fruit Fly Distribution List'.

As we stated at the public meeting, we will send out timely information to talk you through your first season of systematically combating SWD and CFF.

First: thank you for your interest and support! You are the key to controlling these dangerous invasive pests that have infested our area.

Second: congratulations! You have already accomplished the first steps in creating an effective integrated pest management program (IPM):

1. Gave locations for our mapping survey begun last summer,
2. Provided specimens for Tracy Heuppelsheuser, the entomologist at Agri-BC to correctly identify the presence of the spotted wing drosophila (SWD) and the western cherry fruit fly (CFF).
3. Took information brochures home to help guide you in your IPM program,
4. Handed out many brochures and talked to your neighbours and friends,
5. Begun to write, e-mail, and phone the Municipality and the District regarding your concerns

Unfortunately Powell River does not yet have a safe disposal site for invasive species. The garden club and the local master gardeners are working with the municipality, district, and other public agencies and associations to have a certified site up and running by next spring.

Now we must take the next – and very important -- step in our IPM program:

AUTUMN CLEANUP. You may want to save these instructions for future reference.

Autumn clean-up strategies: for trees and bushes infected with SWD and CFF (use any and all that apply):

1. Don't move any suspected host fruit from your property. You are just spreading the infestation further and further. The local land fill is not set up to handle invasive species. You will just be spreading it by putting it in your garbage. Dumping blackberry canes in the bush is the **SINGLE WORSE THING** you can do, as you will be carrying the infestation into our wild fruits.
2. Begin a rigorous garden clean-up. If you had grubs in your fruit this year, you will already know you must be very careful. CFF hosts on cherry trees, and SWD host on so many fruits and were very active until recently.
3. Pick all fruit left on trees and bushes.

4. Pick up all fruit from the ground. Both CFF and SWD survive Ontario's harsh winters. Frost slows them down, but does not kill all of them.

5. Cut off all canes with dried fruit hanging on them.

6. Ensure infected and suspected fruit and eggs are no longer a threat as follows (depending on the quantities):

- put the fruit in the freezer for 48 hours to kill any grubs

- boil the fruit (for grubs and eggs) in a pot on your stove

- cook them in the microwave

- bake them in the oven

7. Bag the cooked fruit, and put in your garbage. This is the safest disposal. Want to compost? See #8.

8. The cooked/frozen fruit can be safely composted under the following conditions: bury the fruit DEEP, away from the air, in the centre of your compost where the worms will work, but nothing else can get to it. The cooked fruit will ferment in the open air on top of your compost pile, attracting those fruit flies that may be still alive and lurking nearby!

9. Bury the infected or cooked/frozen fruit in a deep hole, so they can't burrow out (a hole at least 2 feet deep, 3 feet deep is safer).

10. Put the infected fruit in a plastic bag, add some leaves to help it decompose, and seal it. Stash it somewhere on your property until the contents decompose **MAKING SURE THE BEARS, RACCOONS, CROWS AND RAVENS CANNOT GET TO IT AND TEAR IT OPEN!** Now that the weather is cold, you will have to leave it for several months. When it has finally turned into compost, it can be safely used. Although you could put it around your plants, it is better to bury it, or put it into your compost bin to go through the usual cycle.

11. Burn infected canes and fruit in a bonfire. Within the city limits, we can have outdoor fires in November. Be sure the fire is hot! A smoldering fire will not kill the flies and/or grubs right away, and may give them time to move to a cooler, safe spot.

12. Chop into lengths and burn infested branches or canes in your wood stove or fireplace. Be sure to store these canes out of doors! If they are infected and you bring them into shelter, that will allow eggs and grubs to hatch on your protected porch or woodshed, and inside your house!

Did you have infested cherry trees? CFF pupates in the ground under the tree over the winter. Here is the recommended IPM after you have disposed of the ruined and windfall fruit:

1. Mulch all the tree leaves under the tree out to the drip line.
2. Cover the ground with heavy plastic, anchoring it well at the edges, and tucking it tightly around the trunk. Do not use landscape fabric or mill cloth. Both are permeable, and will allow the tiny flies to get out. Plastic will kill off the majority of the larvae in spring when it pupates into the fly and it tries to emerge from the ground. If you choose to tape the plastic around the tree trunk, it is not wise to leave the tape in place after the weather warms up, as this can create an environment for rot and encourages other pests against the bark.
3. Budget for professional pruning and / or spraying (we will talk about these options next week).

Later in the season, we will discuss how to deal with ground-covers and plastic for next spring and summer.

Next week, I will write about:

- a. The list of berries and fruit trees that are susceptible, and which are most at risk
- b. Netting, pruning, and spraying options
- c. What to do about trees that are too big to pick the fruit or to cover with nets
- d. How to deal with Himalayan blackberry stands that are the uncontrolled bridge crop that will re-infect both domestic fruits and wild berries.

Please spread the word to your neighbours and friends, encouraging them to contact me to get on our confidential e-mail list. You are the real force behind control of these pests, and establishing safe disposal sites as laid out by the British Columbia Invasive Species Council. The garden club and master gardener are hoping to make this a joint venture of all the public agencies and private associations and stakeholders for the mutual benefit of area farmers, home gardeners, wild fruit harvesters and wine makers, and our environment.

(I just read all this out aloud to my husband, and he said he is glad he is not a fruit fly!)

All the best,

Margaret Cooper (and Jo-Ann Canning)
Nov 6, 2013