

HOT NEWS

BLACK, BITING, BUGS ARE BACK

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The Insidious Flower Bug has been a biting nuisance in rural Indiana for the last few years. It appears that 2012 is no different – just earlier. We are beginning to see and feel the effects of these tiny bugs now.

Insidious flower bugs are tiny, broadly oval in shape, and black with whitish or silver markings on the back. Insidious flower bugs can fly and are small enough to make their way through window screens, thus providing equal irritation to people inside homes as outside.

Why they bite is still a bit of a mystery. What we do know is that they live up to their name “insidious”. They seem to bite most often when it is warm and sunny and they usually bite exposed skin that is perspiring slightly.

These bugs do not take blood or inject any saliva - so their bite is not particularly serious to most people. However, bites are certainly annoying especially considering the small size of these bugs. Some people react more to the bite than others and may experience localized swelling, similar to a mosquito bite. Others experience the pain but see no reactions at all.

Not much can be done about these nuisance pests. Insect repellents can be used and will offer some protection but not complete. Covering bare skin will prevent them from biting.

Remember that during the majority of the year, insidious flower bugs are beneficial predators because they feed on small insects and mites or on their eggs (spider mites, aphids, and thrips are particularly attractive to these bugs). For that reason, general insecticides should not be used against these insects.

In years when soybeans experience higher than usual aphid outbreaks, insidious flower bug populations seem to be high as well. In the fall time, the aphids begin to disappear and the insidious flower bugs begin dispersing to areas where humans frequent.

If these tiny bugs are bugging you, try avoiding areas close to soybean fields, wear repellents, long sleeved shirts and pants and most importantly have patience and a thick skin. They will be gone soon enough!



Orius insidiosus feeding on an aphid
(Photo by John Obermeyer)