



Greenhouse TPM/IPM Weekly Report
University of Maryland Cooperative Extension
Central Maryland Research and Education Center

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**Composting Materials for the
Landscape and Nursery Industry**
October 9, 2007
Chesterfield Farms and the Big Fish Grille, Crofton
A registration form is available at <http://www.agnr.umd.edu/ipmnet>

Correction from last week's report:

Margery Daughtrey, Cornell Cooperative Extension, pointed out that in the pansy information last week we listed a metalaxyl fungicide for *Thielaviopsis*. The correct recommendation is to use a thiophanate methyl, fludioxonil, or triflumizole fungicide, which she mentioned is the most effective choice according to their trials in New York. She noted that metalaxyl was the old name for Subdue fungicide, but now with SubdueMAXX the active ingredient is mefenoxam, and neither does anything for *Thielaviopsis*.

CMREC Open House

The Central Maryland Research and Education Center will open its doors to the public on October 6, 2007. Come visit our beautiful 700 + acre farm in central Maryland from 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. Come view educational displays on modern agricultural practices, investigate wildlife with local bird groups, learn more about agricultural animal production, see weird and cool insects, and check out local reptiles. The Maryland Arborist Association will have a live demonstration on tree maintenance and safety in pruning trees. Members of MAA will also be available to answer tree problem questions. University Maryland Cooperative Extension staff and faculty members will be on hand to help educate you on current research and agricultural practices. You will learn how agriculture can continue to thrive as the state becomes more urbanized. The Home and Garden Information Center faculty and staff will help you solve plant problems. There will be live horse demonstrations and many exciting events for the whole family. Come help us celebrate agriculture and expand your horizons. We look forward to seeing you on October 6th at 4240 Folly Quarter Road, Ellicott City 21042.

Fire Ants (*Solenopsis*)

We received an email this week from a grounds supervisor who discovered several large colonies of fire ants in one of their landscape beds. Fire ants form mounds of soil over their colonies, and will swarm out and cover the mound within seconds if it is disturbed. Fire ants bite and inject formic acid into the skin, causing painful burning and blistering.

Fire ants are usually associated with the rootballs of container nursery plants that have been shipped into the state. This is not the first time that they have been found in Maryland- in 2006 fire ants were reported in Ocean City on plant material brought in from Florida. In this particular case, the mounds were isolated to one bed. All of the plants in that bed were also shipped in from Florida this spring.

Fire ant mounds are small and can easily go unnoticed until it is too late. Nursery and landscape managers need to stay alert. Watch for aggressive, biting ants that attack in large swarms. Report any suspicious ant colonies to the Maryland Department of Agriculture – Plant Protection Division.

Pesticides to control fire ants: Permethrin Pro and Talstar (liquid and granular) give the best long term control when broadcasting large areas with a hose-end sprayer. Permethrin Pro calls for 1 ounce of concentrate per 1,000 square feet. Talstar uses only 1/8 to 1/4 ounce per thousand. If granular pesticides are preferred, use Talstar Granules or DeltaGard granules. Although it is used at very low rates, Talstar has given us the longest control; many customers state that no ants re-enter a treated area for as long as three months!

Using baits for fire ants: The use of professional baits is a very thorough method of control, slowly killing the entire colony. Baits work best when used outdoors in the spring and early summer. When the weather gets hot and dry, baits are generally ineffective for fire ant control. However, fire ant baiting has two drawbacks: cost and length of control time. For instance, baiting an entire area will kill the existing ant colonies but will not always control new ant colonies invading from nearby areas that were not baited properly. Also, most people with fire ant problems live on very large lots -- 2 acres or better. This involves a great deal of bait at a premium price.

The most successful baiting practice for fire ant control on turf is to use granular baits such as Ascend or Maxforce Granular in the early spring followed by soil drenches 4 to 6 weeks later if needed. Broadcast granular bait applications are most effective; however, it may take 4 to 6 weeks to give control. Early spring application is ideal because it controls recently developed queens before they leave on their nuptial flights and establish new colonies. Killing the queens is the only way to eliminate fire ant colonies. Follow-up granular bait applications usually are necessary in mid-summer and another one in the fall.

Apply baits when the ground is dry and when ground temperatures are between 70 and 90 °F with no forecast of rain. Apply baits around the base of mounds and also broadcast the entire areas where ants are seen foraging. Baits are picked up by foraging ants looking for food. The ants take the bait back to the ant colony; it passes through the food chain and is fed to the queen ants. Granular bait recommendations are listed below.

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In summer and fall, apply bait in the afternoon when temperatures are cooler because baits may rapidly degrade on hot, sunny days. By the time ants pick up the bait, the heat may have broken down the active ingredient, losing its effectiveness.



Photo by Forest and Kim Starr, www.insectimages.org

2007 ASCFG Mid-Atlantic Regional Meeting

The Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers held their Mid-Atlantic regional meeting at Bob Wollam's Garden in Jeffersonton, Virginia on Monday, August 27, 2007. About 75 growers toured his cut flower operation and listened to a few talks after lunch. Bob Wollam has 6 acres in production of herbaceous and woody plants that he sells to florists as well as at farm markets. Below are a few, brief highlights of what he is currently growing.

Bob Wollam grows *Sedum* 'Matrona' and has found it to be a reliable and consistent bloomer for him. The florists like it better when it's just slightly pink. **Rose geranium** is a plant that is not usually associated with cut flowers, but Bob grows it for the foliage that florists want. It is not hardy so treat it as an annual.



African Basil

Bob sells the flowering herb, **basil**, as a filler for bouquets. He cuts it early in the day and sprays it with water to keep it hydrated and stores it at 50 – 60°F. Be sure to avoid putting basil in the cooler or it will turn black! African basil is a sterile hybrid that is propagated vegetatively.

Euphorbia

Bob likes this plant because he says that it's tall, holds up well, and is very productive. 'Kilimanjaro' colors up much slower than 'Icicles'.

Baptisia australis

Baptisia australis is a perennial that Bob grows for the flowers, foliage and seed pods. Germination of fresh *Baptisia* seed is very high. Bob mentioned that he can get close to 100% germination when he sows seed within a week of collecting it. Now is the time to remove the pods (shown in photo) and plant them. *Baptisia* has a large taproot and doesn't transplant well.





Chelone (Turtlehead)

He grows 'Hot Lips' and says that it is a long lasting cut. Turtlehead is also the common host plant for the Baltimore checkerspot butterfly (Maryland's state insect).



***Gomphocarpus physocarpus*
(*Asclepias physocarpa*)**

The common name is balloon plant and it is in the milkweed family. It is grown for the unusual seed pods.



Ornamental Peppers

Bob grows his ornamental peppers in a hoophouse because they love the heat. Then they are protected for late-season sales in October and November.



Celosia – Chief Series

Chief series is currently only available as a mix. If you didn't pinch celosia earlier for multiple, small branching stems, it is too late to pinch it at this point.