

Pest Alert

Apple Maggot

Updated July 2006

Apple Maggot

The principal local hosts are backyard apple and crabapple trees; however, it also occasionally attacks plum, cherry, peach, pear and hawthorn trees.

In mid- to late June the adult apple maggot flies emerge from pupae in the soil in the drop zone of the infested apple tree. The adult flies usually travel less than 300 m looking for host plants, where the female deposits many eggs, one at a time, just under the skin of immature apples. The eggs hatch into tiny caterpillars, which spend the summer chewing happily away, inside the apple. In the fall when the ripe fruit drops to the ground, the larvae come out of the fruit and move into the soil, where they form pupae or cocoons that survive the cold winter temperatures.

You can reduce the population of apple maggots in your trees in several ways.

In the spring, before the flies emerge from the soil, cover the soil under the tree with an impermeable barrier – landscape fabric, Remay floating row cover fabric or a deep mulch. Be sure to seal the edges of the fabric cover so that the adults cannot escape.

In June and July when the adults are flying they will be preferentially attracted to round red sticky traps that mimic ripe apples as well as ordinary yellow sticky traps. You can buy these at any garden centre. You can make your own sticky traps with Tanglefoot, also available at garden centres, spread on yellow cards, or a red ball. Usually these sticky traps are used for monitoring populations, but if you hang several traps in your backyard trees you may be able to trap enough insects to reduce the population.

In the fall pick up all the fallen apples within a day or two after they drop. Try covering the soil with the same impermeable barrier, Remay or landscape cloth, so that the larvae can't get back into the soil to overwinter.

These insects also attack Hawthorn, pears and cherries so if you have these species in your yard, please watch for the moths, or damaged fruit on these as well. On Hawthorn, the berries can be split right open because of insect damage.

Nurseries in areas of known infestation must contact CFIA for inspection and movement requirements.



Apple maggot larvae in apple.

Photo courtesy Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada



Male apple maggot fly.

Photo courtesy Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada



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