

## **FRUIT FLIES -- OR ARE THEY?**

Fruit Flies are tiny winged insects about 1/16 to 1/8 inch long and have red eyes. The larvae develop in ripe, slightly overripe, or decaying fruits and vegetables. Often fruit flies are found near unrefrigerated potatoes, peaches, cherries, or grapes. During canning season, when bushels or baskets of tomatoes or ripening fruit are in the kitchen, fruit flies are common.

The simplest approach is the most successful. If canning, remove peels or other plant parts from the house immediately at the end of the canning session. Getting rid of spoiled fruit and refrigerating the remainder will also be effective.

Fruit flies will occasionally feed on decayed parts of stored flower bulbs, tubers, or corms. Sort and get rid of anything that is rotten. Storing bulbs, corms, and tubers in Canadian peat or sphagnum moss may lessen decay because of the acidic nature of the peat or moss.

Fruit flies are also attracted to the odors of numerous household products, such as perfumes, soaps, cleaners, and some wood-finishing materials.

Several methods of trapping fruit flies can be quite effective. When the population of fruit flies is high, however, traps won't be effective enough to provide much relief from the nuisance of these insects.

Fruit flies are not the only kind of tiny fly that may float around the house. Two other insects that look similar when viewed with the naked eye are fungus gnats and white flies. Fungus gnats are more mosquito like in appearance than fruit flies. Unlike fruit flies, they commonly breed in the home.

Fungus gnats feed and multiply in warm, wet places. They are commonly found in bathrooms or kitchens, particularly if the drains are slow. Fungus gnats may also multiply in crawlspaces or wet basements. A less common, but still possible source, is the soil of over-watered houseplants. Chemical control of fungus gnats has little impact if the conditions that encourage them to persist.

The **Master Gardener Hotline** is open from April to October, Monday through Friday. Lines are available 9:00 am to noon and 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm at 888-678-3464

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