

Home and Garden IPM and Outreach

For the past 36 years, University of Maine Cooperative Extension IPM has provided home and garden support to the people of Maine through outreach conducted from the Insect and Plant Disease Diagnostic Lab in Orono. The lab offers year-round service to the public providing diagnostic services which include insect and insect injury identification, plant disease identification, and assessment of pest-related issues, while also offering effective pest management recommendations. In 2014, following the closure of Maine Medical Center's tick identification program, Extension added tick ID to the home and garden resources being offered. The lab staff responds to an average of 2,500 annual queries (calls, emails, mail, and walk-ins) and provides public outreach regarding home and garden pest issues through public training sessions, printed educational materials, and through multiple media outlets.

Between 40 and 50 news-media interviews are conducted annually offering home and garden IPM information to a statewide audience. Specialized media interviews (generally talk-radio programs) are given several times per year to provide more in-depth home/garden information and to allow for an audience driven question and answer format. We also provide targeted press releases in response to pest problems of particular interest to the general public. Our staff delivers dozens of home and garden IPM presentations to garden clubs, conservation associations, commercial businesses, and local schools and have presented information through booths at the Bangor and Portland Flower Shows, the Fryeburg Fair, American Folk Festival, and at the Eastern Maine Sportsmen's Show. In each of the past two years we have participated in over a dozen tick/Lyme disease symposia.

In order to make pest management information even more accessible to the people of Maine, a Home & Garden IPM website (umaine.edu/home-and-garden-ipm/) has been created. The Home & Garden IPM website was developed to provide the public with an easy to use resource for pest identification and pertinent management strategies. An easily searchable database of pest fact sheets and vivid photo galleries provide users with an abundance of pest-related content in one easy to use location. An informative Tick ID website (extension.umaine.edu/ipm/tickid/) has also been created to provide information on the biology and management of the state's 14 different tick species. The site also includes tick submission instructions, tick removal guidelines, and links to information on the numerous tick-borne diseases found in Maine. In addition to these online resources we have produced a variety of YouTube videos on home and garden topics including Japanese beetles, bedbugs, white grubs, and ticks.

To supplement our direct and online resources, over 40 IPM fact sheets have been created and are available to the public. A series of 18 informational home and garden IPM cards has also been created for public distribution. In 2014, over 40,000 of these cards were distributed to students throughout the state. Don Barry, the Pest Management Office's manual writer/editor, is responsible for producing, updating, and revising pesticide safety training manuals and for editing the above-mentioned IPM fact sheets.

In addition to our ongoing efforts, we have undertaken a number of methods to convey home and garden information to the public over the past 36 years. Public service announcements (PSA) have been created, but unfortunately tend to air at 3AM. A “pest of the week” column was printed in the Bangor Daily News during the summer months but was eventually phased out. Public identification clinics have been held at the Bangor and South Portland malls, at which people could bring specimens for identification and management recommendations. Similar clinics have also been held at Rogers Farm in Old Town.

In 2012, we launched the GreenBug Home & Garden IPM program, a collaborative partnership with seven greenhouse/nursery retailers in central and southern Maine. The retailers made a series of free UMaine produced pest identification cards available to their customers, providing point-of-sale outreach to potential home and garden pesticide users. The hope was to generate some funding for home and garden IPM through voluntary retailer donations, which so far hasn't happened, though I did recently receive an email this week from a greenhouse owner in Boothbay who is interested in becoming involved in the program.

Funding received is used for various aspects of the program, including the purchasing of new equipment, maintenance of old equipment, transportation, printing of literature, supplies, and portions of soft money employee's salaries. We are in the process of contacting other states to generate ideas for future expansion of the home and garden IPM program and are hoping to develop a social media presence. We would also like to welcome any suggestions from the Board of Pesticides control on ways to enhance and expand our home and garden IPM outreach.