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Problems with your cherry crop last year?

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The culprit may have been the spotted wing drosophila - a new pest of cherry, caneberries & strawberries.

SUMMARY

This new fruit pest attacks not only cherries, but also several other berry crops. Controls for spotted wing drosophila must be carefully timed to be effective.

Last year, in April and May the Master Gardener Help Desk had a number of requests from the public asking for help with problems they were having with their cherry crop. The cherries were barely ripe but they had holes and they appeared to be rotting before they really had even ripened. Inspection of the fruit indicated the presence of maggots – fly larvae. The culprit turned out to be a species of vinegar fly not previously found in California – *Drosophila suzukii*. *Drosophila suzukii* is now commonly referred to as the spotted wing drosophila due to the single black spot at the tip of each wing of the male adult. Don't think though that you will be able to identify this fly by those markings without magnification because these adults are small, really small, about the size of the "fruit flies" (other species of vinegar flies to which they are closely related) that fly around overripe fruit in your fruit bowl. While other species of vinegar flies attack rotting or fermenting fruit, this

spotted wing drosophila attacks healthy ripening fruit as well.

Several Fruits Affected:

Even though they were originally noticed in cherries, they have now been identified as also infesting raspberry, blackberry, blueberry, and strawberry crops. Like other vinegar flies, it appears to have a short life cycle (one to several weeks depending upon temperature), and may have as many as ten generations per year. This rapid reproductive rate allows it to quickly develop large populations and can inflict severe damage to a crop. The female is able to penetrate the skin of the fruit to lay her eggs and this act creates a small depression ("sting") on the fruit surface. The eggs hatch and the maggots develop and feed inside the fruit, causing the flesh of the fruit to turn brown and soft.

Hand Pick to Control:

Since spotted wing drosophila attacks





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ripening fruit, it is often not noticed in home garden situations until the fruit is being harvested. Sprays at this time will not protect the crop because maggots are already in the fruit. If only some of the fruit are infested, you can salvage some of the crop by harvesting immediately and sorting the fruit, removing any with “stings” on the surface. It is recommended that all infested fruit be removed from the tree and picked up from the ground. It should then be placed in a sealed plastic bag and disposed of in the trash. Do not put the infested fruit in your compost pile as it may not get hot enough to destroy the eggs and larvae still in the fruit.

If you had this pest in your cherries last year you may want to try GF-120 NR

Naturalyte (an attractant bait plus spinosad insecticide). It has shown to be partially effective in commercial orchards and may also be useful for home gardeners. GF-120 kills adult flies before they lay eggs and must be applied preventively before the fruit are infested. Sprays should probably begin 2-3 weeks prior to harvest or when the first “sting” is noticed on fruit. GF-120 is available to home gardeners in some farm chemical distributor stores and other outlets but it is quite expensive and does not come in sizes appropriate for one or two trees. For more information on the application process and timing go to this University of California website:

<http://ipm.ucdavis.edu/EXOTIC/drosophila.html>.



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