



It's that time of year again – Asian lady beetles and box elder bugs are gathering and looking for places to over-winter. There are not many humans that appreciate the influx of these insects into homes, with populations especially annoying and problematic as the weather warms throughout the winter and spring. Once the insects are in the home environment, control is more difficult and labor intensive. So – how to keep them out? There are a couple of options that will help to keep the nuisance factor to a minimum. The first line of defense should be cultural, excluding them from entry to homes, garages, and sheds. If that is not a method that will guarantee successful control, there are chemical products that can be applied by a licensed commercial applicator, and there are also products that can be applied by the average homeowner to their own property.

Cultural control can be very effective when diligently practiced. This involves taking a good look at the building where control is needed. Check around all of the windows, doors, sill plates, attic vents, and roofing - anywhere there is a bit of open space is an invitation to enter. Once the potential trouble spots are identified – caulk, caulk, caulk, where ever possible. In large problem areas where caulking will not work well, think about applying fine screen to prohibit entry. Just be sure to caulk around the edges of the screening. Another cultural control is to remove some of the host material (e.g. box elder trees) as a method to reduce future populations. While this is not fool proof, it can help to decrease the numbers, making other control methods a bit easier.

For those homes with siding, every space underneath the siding layers is a wonderful place for critters to gather. In those instances, caulk where possible, and use other cultural control techniques as needed - but often these are not viable options on their own. For more intense control, chemical products are available to provide added assistance. There are a couple of ways for these products to be applied. The first is to hire a qualified, experienced, and licensed applicator to do the job. While the cost is greater than doing the job yourself, the professionals possess the knowledge, equipment, and often more effective product formulations to handle the task once in a quick and efficient manner – saving you a weekend and change. If hiring a professional, be proactive in asking questions about the products used, as well as the time frame for chemical effectiveness – which can be up to 90 or more days. They should be able to provide you with a copy of the product label before any application is made. This gives you an opportunity to do a bit of research to make sure that you are not allergic to anything that will be applied

to your home. Ask about toxicity to pets, if you have them. Quality professionals will be more than willing to address any questions that you have.

If thinking about applying chemicals to the exterior of your own home, take some time prior to purchasing your chosen product to read all of the safety precautions, mixing instructions, and application instructions. Know, purchase and have ready ahead of time all of the equipment - both application and safety gear - necessary to do the job safely and effectively. Getting product up, under, and into all of the cracks, crevices, and overhangs is essential for good control, but be aware that high pressure is not completely necessary for the average homeowner application. A simple, smaller volume backpack or standing tank applicator is sufficient. Refills will be more frequent, but cost will be kept lower and application will be easier to control. Make sure that the product intended for use is available in quantities sufficient to get the job done, as mixing different chemical products together can be a very tricky and often dangerous practice.

If choosing chemical products for control, which active ingredients are the most effective to use? According to Phil Pellitteri, director of the Insect Lab on the UW-Madison campus, products containing the active ingredients permethrin, Lambda Cyhalothrin, or bifenthrin will work very well and have good residual effectiveness. To find the active ingredient on the label – look for the very small print, often found on the front of the container.

With our current weather changes, the pace of both Asian lady beetles and box elder bugs has intensified for finding over-wintering sites. As these critters gather visibly in the warmth and sunshine on the exterior of your home – think of them as a reminder to get the control done very soon.