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Spring weather brings out bugs  
but swift action can control them

The bright warm spring weather is a time for gardeners to be on the lookout for troublesome insects.

Dr. Wynn Watson of the Museum of Zoology at Wilfrid Laurier University warns that several insect pests are already at work and that control measures should be started soon.

Adults of the hairy chinch bug are active now that the temperature has remained over 22° for several days. These insects are about 4 mm long with white wings and a black cross marking the back. In two to three weeks the nymphs will start to appear in the sod.

If the young stages are numerous they may cause patchy yellowing in the grass that often leads to extensive dying of the sod. As soon as the first signs of this damage are seen, control should be started. Diazinon 50% emulsion concentrate is recommended.

The small black adults of the birch leaf miner are already laying eggs on the delicate new leaves of many ornamental birch trees. Once the eggs hatch, the larvae burrow into and hollow out the leaves.

Although trees attacked by these insects will withstand their feeding for a number of seasons, control is recommended. Because the larvae mine the leaves, they must be controlled with a systemic insecticide. Dimethoate (Cygon 2E) used in concentrated form is recommended.

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As soon as the first blotches are noticed on the leaves a band of Cygon 2E should be painted around the trunk of the tree about a foot from the ground. This control is not recommended for trees less than a half inch in diameter, the Laurier professor warned.

Ornamental willows should be examined for the small shiny blue or purple adults of the willow leaf beetle. These adults and their larvae are now feeding on the leaves. Dr. Watson said it is possible for these insects to strip the leaves from parts of the trees. To prevent this damage on ornamental trees any of the topical sprays such as carbaryl (Sevin) may be used immediately.

In the case of the birch leaf miner and the willow leaf beetle it may be necessary to repeat the control measures several times during the growing season.