

Prevent wormy apples and pears

Question: I have very healthy looking fruit trees that should be producing great fruit. However, every year I end up with wormy apples and pears. I use a control product in early May and June, but the fruit seems to get damaged later in the growing season. Please advise me how to improve my pest control while maintaining a low toxicity program.

Answer: It is frustrating to raise nice trees only to lose the fruit crop to pests every year. It is important to look up a good control reference for both diseases and insect pests like the codling moth, to identify the low toxicity products and to get guidance on the timing of each required control. OSU has an excellent publication (EC 631) called "Managing Diseases and Insects in Home Orchards" that will give you options for each major insect or disease pest. This publication is targeting home orchards being cared for by non-professionals. All of the materials listed are available at garden and big box stores and are considered low toxicity. However, all pesticides should be used carefully, and only after you read the label. This will help to ensure the safety of your family, beneficial insects and other wildlife visiting your orchard.

Programs to control codling moths have changed a little over the past few years. Chemical sex attractants called pheromones are making monitoring of insect pests in your orchard much easier. The first step you should take to improve your codling moth program is to buy a pheromone trap. The traps are available at farm stores or online. The traps are shaped like a small triangular tent that has a sticky surface on the floor. In the middle of the sticky floor you will place a pheromone cap that looks like a small eraser that would fit over the end of a pencil. This capsule will give off an attractant that pulls both male and female codling moths into the trap, where they get stuck. For our area of Douglas County the second week of May will be a good time for beginning your spray monitoring program. When you catch 5 or more moths in the week that



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follows, you should make your first spray. If you don't catch 5 moths, don't spray, but clean out the trap and start monitoring for the next week.

After you make the first spray, you should keep monitoring for the moths through June, July and August. In any week that your trap catches two moths over the rest of summer, you should make another spray. Always remember to clean out any insects from the trap after each week. The pheromone capsule that you put in the trap will be good for 8 weeks. Verify this when you buy the trap and capsule. Once you hit mid-July make sure to put a new capsule in your trap and discard the old capsule. That second capsule will cover the remainder of the monitoring season into September.

When you choose materials to control the codling moths, you have good options that are very low toxicity to people and pets. It is important to choose two or more products that have different modes of action. This helps to prevent an insect like codling moth from becoming resistant to a certain group of insecticides that have the same chemical make-up. I often alternate between Spinosad and Cyd-X for two or three sprays and then go to Malathion or Sevin for one spray, before going back to the Spinosad and Cyd-X rotation. You should never choose one of the softer materials like Cyd-X and just use it over and over during the summer. The codling moths will develop resistance to that product.

Codling moths are not a difficult insect to control if you follow these basic guidelines. Having the pheromone trap will allow you to know when the pest is present and whether it is at a level that will cause significant damage. This program keeps you from spraying when pests are not around. Trapping will only work if you monitor all summer and are



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A codling moth emerges from an apple. Careful monitoring and judicious application of proper pesticide can prevent these unwelcome pests.

good about spraying when it is needed. If you have further questions about planning pest control programs for codling moths, call or visit the OSU Extension Master Gardeners.

Do you have a gardening question? Please email, call, or visit the Douglas County Master Gardener Plant Clinic at douglasmg@oregonstate.edu, 541-672-4461, or 1134 S.E. Douglas Ave., Roseburg. Douglas County Master Gardeners are trained volunteers who help the OSU Extension Service serve the people of Douglas County.



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Pheromone traps are useful for monitoring the presence of codling moths.