Natter’s Notes
Spotted Wing Drosophila (SWD)
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During recent years, numerous clients have requested management options and/or suggestions for how to avoid damage from SWD. Many Master Gardeners have also experienced the gut-wrenching disappointment that comes with finding that their fruits are infested.

You more than likely already know something about the spotted wing Drosophila (*Drosophila suzukii*), a fruit fly that’s far different from its annoying relatives which hover over fruit bowls. Also referred to as SWD – and perhaps a few choice swear words – these flies attack fruit still on the plant. Because their favored color range is in the red through blues, the most common victims include fruits many gardeners enjoy growing, among them blueberries, cherries, peaches and plums.


Perhaps the easiest management option is to harvest often and a bit earlier than normal. Next, immediately process the freshly harvested fruit, even if it’s only to freeze the fruit until time is available to can or jam or whatever.

This year, I saw the first potentially SWD-infested fruit in mid-June, a strawberry from Clackamas County. The client was requested to rear the worm to adulthood, then return so that the office MGs can confirm as SWD or not.

So, yes, when clients ask about worms in their fruit, whether their own or fruits obtained from farmers’ markets or elsewhere, MGs should provide them with guidelines to rear out the adults. (Office MGs can photocopy the how-to sheet distributed in late 2012; or print page 9 from the September 2012 Metro MG Newsletter.) As soon as adult insects are present, usually within three weeks or less, clients should bring the closed rearing container and the contained insects to the closest Master Gardener office to verify whether or not the infestation is due to SWD.
You might wonder why it’s important to rear out fruit-infesting worms. Well, it’s because SWD must be differentiated from other fruit-damaging fly larvae, among them the Western cherry fruit fly and the blueberry maggot, the latter not yet known to be in Oregon. An established treatment protocol already exists for cherry fruit flies.

**Rearing information for gardeners**

How to rear fruit-infesting flies:
1. Place suspect fruit in a clear jar. (e.g.: a half peach; a whole plum; several strawberries; or about 12 smaller fruits)
2. Fold a quarter section of paper towel into a small wad, then place it at one side of the fruit in the jar. (The toweling will absorb juice from the spoiling fruit.)
3. Cover the container with a “lid” of paper toweling; secure it with a rubber band. Set the jar where you will see it every day but not in direct sunlight.
4. Check the jar daily but don’t open the lid; it’s okay if the fruit becomes moldy. (If fruit is infested, adult flies will emerge from the pupal cases, usually within three weeks.)
5. When adult flies are present, ask the client to bring the still-closed rearing jar to the Master Gardener office to verify which fly is present.

**What to do if SWD is verified**

Previous procedure if a new SWD infestation was confirmed, was to send a report to the SWD Project Team. It’s unclear whether that policy will continue. The main glitch, here, is that OSU’s SWD site is currently in the throes of a re-launch. So, before you suggest clients visit the SWD home page for detailed information, first verify the information is available.

*Resources on next page…*
Currently available resources:

- What backyard growers need to know about SWD
  http://horticulture.oregonstate.edu/system/files/u1318/Backyard fruit growers information SWD 5-26-11.pdf
- Recognize Fruit Damage from Spotted Wing Drosophila
  http://ir.library.oregonstate.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1957/19525/em9021.pdf
- Protecting Garden Fruits from Spotted Wing Drosophila
  http://ir.library.oregonstate.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1957/20883/em9026.pdf
- Videos about SWD from various university sites: Go to www.youtube.com and type the phrase “spotted wing drosophila” (without quotes) in the text box at the top of the page.
- Spotted wing drosophila http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn74158.html
- Emerging Pest: Spotted Wing Drosophila (PNW Insect Management Handbook)
  http://pnwhandbooks.org/insect/pnw-insect-management-handbook/emerging-pest-spotted-wing-drosophila; additional details specific to each fruit are in the section for that crop.