

Unusual Peaches to Termite Problems

Peach trees produce double, triple fruits

Question: I have seen an amazing number of double fruits on my peach trees this spring? Any explanation for this occurrence?

Answer: I've seen the same thing in a number of locations including our Master Gardener Demonstration Orchard and several other peach growers have also noticed the same problem. Water stress and heat stress during carpel initiation in the developing flower buds will cause the production of multiple carpels in a single flower instead of the usual one carpel per flower, hence the double or triple fruit. Flower bud development occurs during summer and will vary depending on the peach variety, but mid-to-late August is the general time period in our area. Effective watering is key to reducing the problem.

Double fruit ideally should be selectively thinned out as part of the general spring fruit thinning process (which should have been done a while back before developing fruit reach dime size). Sometimes, one fruit may abort and the remaining peach will have a malformed suture at harvest making it unmarketable for commercial growers and unattractive (but still edible) for home growers.

This problem highlights the long-term impacts from the weather conditions over the



PHOTO BY Dr. William M. Johnson

Record drought and temperatures conditions over the 2011 growing season stressed peach trees and resulted in higher numbers of twin and triplet peaches being produced in the 2012 season.

2011 growing season. There were two important weather extremes: that of record temperatures in addition to record drought. Either extreme can result in abnormal plant growth and reproduction and both extremes occurring together complicated matters even more.

Termite Season

Among insect pests that most homeowners dread the most, termites certainly rank at the top. "Know thine enemy" is obviously sound advice for any battle and is the key to winning the war against this worthy adversary from the insect world.

Termites are most visible during the spring because this is the primary period of the year when they are likely to

swarm. I've already received numerous e-mails and phone calls from alarmed homeowners about termites shudderingly appearing inside their home.

Since we've had a remarkably mild winter, termite activity—or to be more accurate, visible termite activity—is occurring earlier than usual. Actually, termite season is really a year-round activity. Even though they are usually out-of-sight during most of the year, they are still carrying out their mission. Most people do not become aware of these unwelcome guests until they find wood damaged by termites or find termite swarmers.

A few simple precautions will help reduce the chances of subterranean termites turning



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your dream home into a nightmare. When subterranean termites invade a home, hundreds, even thousands, of dollars in damage can occur. They often go unnoticed because you don't see them crawling around. They do their damage inside the wood.

Any home can be attacked by termites. There are, however, certain conditions around your home that may create a situation conducive to termite activity.

- Check for entry points near windows and doors. Cover exposed wood with paint or sealer. Caulk cracks and crevices. Screen windows and vents.
- Do not stack firewood next to the house or garage.

- Check for areas around plumbing leaks that stay wet. Subterranean termites require a source of moisture and are very attracted to wood that stays moist.

- The following is my recommendation for gardeners who may not be aware of how they can be "termite enablers": If you mulch your landscape shrubs located around the home foundation, be sure that the mulch layer (or soil layer) does not make contact with bricks, weep holes, exterior wood, etc. This is very important and I've seen far too many cases of excessive use of mulch in such areas.

The existence of one or more of the above situations creates a very inviting and easy route for subterranean termites to gain access to homes. If you have any of these conditions, they should be corrected. For more information about termites and their control, contact my office (GALV3@wt.net) and request Extension publication E-368.

and often collect near windows, glass patio doors and other sources of light. They are most common in the spring. A few to several hundred may occur for a short period of time. Sometimes you only see them once and they die quickly. These swarmers are an indication that there is an active colony in your home. If termite swarmers are found inside the home, a qualified pest control professional should be contacted.



If you mulch your landscape shrubs located around the home foundation, be sure that the mulch layer does not make contact with bricks, weep holes, exterior wood, etc. to help avoid termites gaining entry into the home.