

Gardeners try natural pest control

Excitement and ladybugs were in the air this summer on Pilgrim Street in Birmingham. Sheila Eggle suggested an alternative method (to spraying) of pest control to Stephen and Ellen Masty and three other neighbors. This is the second year they have tried Integrated Pest Management — and it seems to have worked.

Although lacewings and praying mantises were included, the most success was seen by using ladybugs. Here's what happened.

The trees were sprayed with a dormant oil spray early in the year and the ladybugs ordered from California.

About February the shipment arrived, with instructions to keep them refrigerated for a month. Since the weather would still be too cold for release and the instructions said not to return them, Masty and friends gave the five bags, each containing more than 1,000 ladybugs packed in moist straw, to Cranbrook.

THE BUGS were released in the Orchard House to control aphids and they really did their job. When the vents were opened during warmer weather, one by one the bugs left to feast upon the plants in the nearby Cranbrook gardens. Therefore, a benefit came from the shipper's error!

The second shipment arrived in

mid-May and it was kept in the refrigerator for a month. Three times a week, the ladybugs were released until all were busily foraging in the five yards by the end of June. Next year, Masty said they will "hold back" a few for later release. By about August they had all disappeared.

No other sprays were applied in the yards and gardens of these homes. The consensus of the group of homeowners was that, given the unusually wet summer, the plan was a success. One man put the bugs and the packing material in the crochets of trees when releasing them.

MY INFORMATION tells me that in order to ensure that the ladybugs stay "home," plenty of aphids should be present. The cool of the evening is the best time for release after the area has been watered down. A good supply of food stimulates egg laying. More eggs means more larvae, which also eat aphids.

There are other predators to use to control other insects for Integrated Pest Management, such as the green lacewing, praying mantis and nematode.

I believe we are just scratching the surface of this innovative way to control pests in the environment. My hat is off to the neighbors on Pilgrim for their forward-thinking plan.



down to earth

Marty Figley

DOES YOUR garden group participate in horticultural therapy? If so, "Growing with Gardening," A 12-Month Guide for Therapy, Recreation and Education" by Bibby Moore (\$14.95 paper, \$29.95 cloth, The University of North Carolina Press, P.O. Box 2268, Chapel Hill, N.C. 27515-2268, p. 191, 956-5531), is sure to give new ideas for this subject.

Specific instructions and charts are very clear, for instance, a list of

plants that need a rooting hormone applied for success is included. Gardening chores and planning for specific temperature zones is most helpful. As you know, Alice W. Burlingame, my predecessor, was a pioneer in this work, which is still dear to her heart.

Bill Fuhrman of Bloomfield Hills said he has had some success using slug pellets made by Ortho in discouraging these pests.

To speak on plants

Ralph Mize, Cranbrook Educational Community horticulturalist, will give a lecture, "Enhance your Plant Palette," at 7:30 p.m. Monday, Oct. 2, at the Cranbrook House Library.

His program is sponsored by Cranbrook P.M. For registration information and brochure, call Cranbrook P.M., 845-3635.

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