

INSIDE GRUNDY COUNTY
By Bill Arndorfer
Grundy County Extension Education Director
April 1, 2005

The warm weather has brought our Asian Lady Beetle friends back to life. We have had numerous calls in the office wondering what to do about the latest invasion. Last fall the Asian Lady Beetles were looking for a place to over winter and wandered into the houses. Now as the temperatures rise they are looking to get back outdoors but as many of you have discovered, they don't know the way and are again leading the invasion indoors. Just like I recommended last fall, your best defense is the vacuum cleaner. While there are insecticides that can control the beetle, they are not recommended to use indoors because it would not be safe or economical as it would require several applications. It is recommended that you vacuum frequently and empty the vacuum bag relatively soon thereafter. Dr. Susan Jones at Ohio State University recommends inserting a woman's knee-high stocking into the vacuum's extension hose and then securing it with a rubber band before putting the attachment back on. This allows you to trap the beetles inside the stocking, which then closes up at the end with the rubber band when you remove it. You can then take the beetles out to your garden and release them where they can feed on aphids and some scale insects or just throw the stocking and beetles into the trash. Keep in mind the beetles will not harm you or your household furnishings (okay, they might pinch you if irritated or leave an odor if squished). This invasion should be relatively short lived as we transition into the warmer weather.

On another subject, it is approaching the time of year to get your crabgrass control applied. If you are looking for an alternative weed control product for your lawn, you may want to consider corn gluten meal. This all natural product can be used as a lawn 'weed and feed' product and an alternative to the synthetic pesticides widely used.

It is produced as a fine yellow powder but can be pelletized for easier application to the soil. It offers preemergent control of weeds like dandelions, pigweed, crabgrass, plantain, lambs quarter and curly dock. To be effective, it must be applied just ahead of weed germination. Moisture is also needed to activate the material but extended wet periods may reduce effectiveness which is also true of synthetic preemergence herbicides. Research shows there are no harmful effects on mature Kentucky bluegrass.

The recommended rate of application for corn gluten meal is twenty pounds per one thousand square feet. Research has shown this will reduce crabgrass infestation by from fifty to sixty percent the first year. Again, timing application as close to weed germination as possible is important to control. This application rate also provides two pounds of nitrogen per one thousand square feet.

It is important to realize there is no post emergence control of weeds with this product. Corn gluten meal will not provide as complete a control as synthetic pesticides and is likely to cost more. However, it does provide a natural substitute for those who choose not to use synthetic herbicides for pre-emergence weed control. To learn more about corn gluten meal and where to find it, check out the following website:

www.gluten.iastate.edu or contact the Grundy Office of Iowa State University Extension
at 319-824-6979.