

PLANT PEST Newsletter

MINNESOTA EXTENSION SERVICE

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

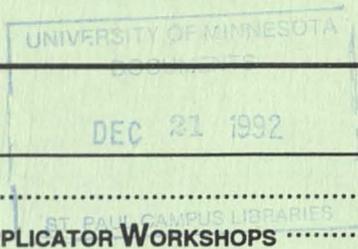
PPST23

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Please send in your *Plant Pest Newsletter* subscription renewal for the 93-94 season. Subscription forms can be found in PPST21, October 16, 1992.

MISCELLANEOUS

1993 Agricultural Crops Pesticide Applicator Workshops

The 1993 workshops have been scheduled for commercial and non-commercial pesticides applicators in category C—Herbicides and category D—Fungicides/Insecticides. More workshops have been added this year to help reduce crowding. Two workshops will be held at different locations at the same times on January 6 and January 7.

Date	Town	Location
January 4	Worthington	Holiday Inn
January 5	Marshall	Best Western
January 6	Sleepy Eye	Orchid Inn
January 6	North Mankato	Best Western Garden Inn
January 7	Owatonna	Western Inn
January 7	Rochester	Holiday Inn South
January 20	St. Paul Campus	Earle Brown Center

By attending one of these workshops you will be satisfying your training requirement for certification for the years 1994, 1995, and 1996. For more information contact Nancy Harvey at (612) 625-8215 or 1-(800) 367-5363.

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Assistant Extension Agriculturist

**For more information regarding the Plant Pest Newsletter
contact Extension Plant Pathology at 612-625-6290**

County Agents: Please Alert
Master Gardeners of the Following Items

RECYCLE CHRISTMAS TREES—As beautiful as they may be, it's important to take Christmas trees down before they become a fire hazard in your home or office. Some towns and municipalities collect them then grind them up for mulch. If yours does not, try to make full use of the trees yourself. Branches may be laid over bulb or perennial beds to help insulate them. They can also be stuck vertically into the ground or snow to shield sensitive evergreens from bright winter sunlight. Or they may be fed into a home chipper/shredder.

HOUSE PLANT PROBLEMS—This is the time of year when house plants begin to look a little peaked. Resist the temptation to add extra fertilizer or water—this results in leaves with brown spots and tips due to salt accumulation and droopy, pale green leaves due to root rot. Foliage diseases are seldom a problem on indoor plants, unless they have recently come from a greenhouse setting. Watch closely for spider mites, whiteflies, scale and other insects. We recently received a sample the caller described as "powdery mildew"—it was really mealy bugs. (See also AG-FS-1130, *Caring for House Plants in Northern Climates*; AG-FS-1031, *House Plant Insect Control*.)

SMALL-SIZED FLIES—There are several different types of flies that are roughly the same size, i.e. about 1/4 inch long, that people may find in homes. Although they are not very easy to distinguish, they have very different habits and require different control. (See also AG-FS-1024, *Flies in the Home*.)

One of the most common flies is fruit flies. They are attracted to and reproduce in fermenting materials, such as old fruits and vegetables, soft drink and wine residue, and other rotting food material. Fungus gnats are also common but breed in completely different circumstances: they prefer damp soil, especially soil that is overwatered. There are several flies (such as humped-backed flies and moth flies) that reproduce in high organic material, e.g. broken sewage lines or in the gelatinous material that accumulates in drain pipes and drain traps.

Killing the adults that are seen does little to control the overall problem. The first step with unknown flies is to correctly identify them; if you do not recognize them, send them to the Dial-U Clinic. Once you know what they are, you know what their habits are. From there the best

control is to find the breeding source (sometimes easier said than done) and remove it. Without a food source, the flies' life cycle is broken, and they are quickly controlled.

HOLIDAY PLANTS TO WATCH OUT FOR—There's still a lot of misinformation floating around regarding the safety of decorative holiday plants. Poinsettias have been tested thoroughly and proven beyond the shadow of a doubt to be non-toxic when accidentally ingested. That does not mean that anyone is recommending you eat the plant; far from it. Poinsettia is grown to be admired, not chewed. No doubt, it's flavor leaves much to be desired. However, you need never fear having one in the house where pets or toddlers might munch on it.

Ornamental peppers are not toxic either, but they may be so hot as to cause problems for anyone who eats them raw or rubs their fingers in their eyes after handling them. Again, these plants are meant to be looked at, nothing more.

Mistletoe is considered toxic so you really must be careful not to place it so pets or children can reach it. Remember, a hanging sprig can easily drop a berry or two as it dries, and little tykes seem to have a built-in magnet for finding such dropped items on the floor.

ORDER CALENDAR FOR TIPS ALL YEAR—Order a copy of *Minnesota Gardening, 1993*, for a year-long supply of handy garden tips by horticulturists, entomologists, and plant pathologists. All information is geared specifically to northern gardening.

The calendar makes a great last-minute holiday gift for your gardening friends and family. You can buy it from any county extension office or directly from the Distribution Center, 3 Coffey Hall, 1420 Eckles Ave, U of MN, St. Paul, 55108. It's also available at bookstores, gift shops, and garden centers throughout the state.

If you order from the Distribution Center enclose a check (made out to the University of Minnesota) for \$6.39 (includes tax) for each calendar, and a shipping and handling fee of \$1.50 per order (not per calendar.)

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