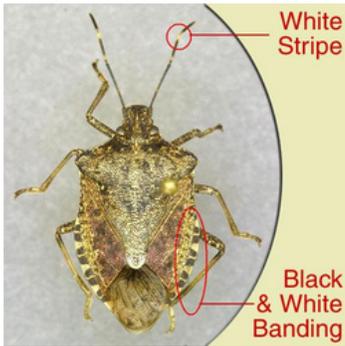


Ways to minimize brown marmorated stink bug damage



Picture from Rutgers - New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station

Not only do they stink, as their name suggests, but brown marmorated stink bugs can do a number on crops. No matter the size of your garden or field, you will need to take action to keep this pest at bay.

Brown marmorated stink bugs have been in the eastern half of the state for some time but have been appearing in an increasing number of Western Kentucky counties since 2019.

While they look similar to native stink bugs, this invasive species has a brown, mottled top, a gray belly and white bands on their antennae.

These stink bugs will feed on all kinds of crops. Some of their favorites include tomatoes, sweet corn, peppers and eggplant. They also attack field crops like soybeans and ornamental trees like redbuds. Their feeding causes crop discoloration, makes the insides of crops corky and most importantly, inedible.

Due to their ability to quickly decimate crops, home gardeners and commercial growers should take action to control brown marmorated stink bugs as soon as they appear. Because of their strong scent, you likely do not want to smash them. But if you do accidentally crush them, their scent will not attract other stink bugs to your crops. However, you can sweep them off of plants and into buckets of soapy water to kill them in large numbers.

Homeowners can control the stink bugs when they are small with insecticidal soap or the larger stink bugs with products containing pyrethroids. You can also use physical exclusion methods like row covers or netting to exclude the stink bugs. Timing is everything with row covers as you don't want to hinder pollination by using them.

Commercial producers can focus their monitoring efforts along field edges, where the brown marmorated stink bug is most often found infiltrating. Pyrethroid products can also help in these situations.

Keep a close watch over your crops because you will likely see two generations of stink bugs during the summer. The first generation will appear in early summer and the second shows up in late summer or early fall.

When the weather gets cooler, you may start finding brown marmorated stink bugs in your home as they seek shelter from the colder temperatures.

For more information on controlling brown marmorated stink bugs or other pests, contact the Clay County office of the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service at 598-2789