

Garden Foes: Fruit Fly - October 26 1993

Two notorious fruit fly pests that occur in Australia are:

1. Queensland Fruit Fly - Brown with Yellow Markings
2. Mediterranean Fruit Fly – Yellow with Brown Markings

These pests attack all fruit except pineapples. The fruit fly attacks stone fruit, Loquats, Apples, citrus, Brazilian cherry, figs, tomatoes, eggplant, and capsicum. Also, flowering [prunus](#) and quince. The adult is about 10mm long with clear wings and yellow markings on the body. Fruit is usually attacked after ripening begins. Brown specks show where the eggs have been deposited, which is usually 5mm under the skin. Creamy white larvae or maggots burrow into the fruit which rots and usually falls to the ground. When fully grown, the larvae which are now about 8mm long, leave the host fruit and burrow 5-10 cm into the soil to pupate. The adult fly later pushes its way up through the soil. The life cycle takes about 5 weeks with the result that 5 or more generations may occur in a year.

Early ripening fruit such as loquats which are ready in September usually host the fruit fly with the result that the fruit fly numbers build up through Summer, then go on to attack other fruit. All fallen & infected fruit should be gathered up and destroyed by boiling or burning. Or seal the fruit in a plastic bag and leave in the sun for a few days. Also, a good idea is to feed the infected fruit to the chooks, if you have any.

Organic fruit fly control requires stringent garden hygiene as well as repellents or sprays. Don't bury damaged fruit as the fruit fly will continue to develop. Fruit fly can fly 5 kilometers. Cover spray should start well before harvest. Suitable chemicals include Dimethoate (no longer available) and Fenthion (no longer available) but these may damage some early varieties of apricots and peaches, so Trichlorfon is to be preferred for the fruit trees.

Whilst commercial producers of fruit must follow an intensive schedule of chemical applications, the home gardener may prefer to use biological control, or an herbal spray made at home. Pyrethrum is a broad-spectrum spray. It is fairly safe to use as it breaks down in sunlight from 2 hours to 2 days. Spray in the evening, so that it doesn't affect bees and other useful species.

Fruit fly repellent made from 1 litre Kerosene, 1 litre Caustic and a packet of moth balls is effective for small outbreaks of fruit fly. Place in tins about 10 meters apart hung from the fruit trees. An easy bait to catch the fruit fly is fruit juice with a pinch of yeast or even beer. You can also try cut up oranges, banana skin and / or kiwi fruit in water with a pinch of yeast, or brown sugar in hot water. Hopefully, the pests will drown in the liquid, which should be hung in tins from the trees. I think that will do for the BADDIE today.