

Edible Gardening Series with Sarah Bostick and Carol Wyatt-Evens UF/IFAS Extension Sarasota County

Resources from Session 3: Integrated Pest Management

University of Florida publications related to Integrated Pest Management (available on-line)

- *Natural Products for Managing Landscape and Garden Pests in Florida* – 13-page deep dive into the subject! <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/IN/IN19700.pdf>
- *Grower's IPM Guide for Florida Tomato and Pepper Production* – over 200 pages of solidly practical information. https://ipm.ifas.ufl.edu/Agricultural_IPM/Growers_IPM_Guide_for_Florida_Tomato_and_Pepper_Production.html
- *Natural Enemies and Biological Control* – 3 pages on some of the most common beneficial insects in Florida. <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/in120>
- *Do-It-Yourself Insect Pest Traps* - <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/in1103>
- *Intercropping, Crop Diversity, and Pest Management* - <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/in922>

Other plant and insect diagnostics and identification resources:

- Insect Identification website: www.insectidentification.org/
- BugGuide website: www.bugguide.net
- *Vegetable Gardening in Florida* by James Stephens (book) – this excellent book has a section on common pests and diseases.
- Your local UF Extension office: <https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/find-your-local-office/>
- Register for UF's DDIS (Distance Diagnostic and Identification System) <https://ddis.ifas.ufl.edu/>

Answers to a few of the questions asked during Q&A

Question: Every fall my fig tree loses all its leaves. The leaves either turn black with a fungus-like covering on them (as do some other plants near it) or they dry up and fall off. They grow back eventually. It produces nice figs. Is it diseased and can I eat the figs safely? Should I do something to help with this black fungus-like stuff on these plants?

Answer: Figs naturally “go dormant” in the winter, even in Florida. The slightly cooler weather and diminishing daylight hours trigger a natural response in figs. They drop their leaves and hunker down for the winter. Warmer weather and increasing daylight hours trigger to the figs to produce leaves again. There are a handful of common diseases that affect figs in Florida and most of them can cause a fig tree to drop its leaves earlier than it would if not infected. The most common fig disease in Florida is called “fig rust”. It is so named because it looks like the leaves are covered in rust. Fig rust is a fungal disease and if can eventually lead to decreased fruit production. Black-fungus-like growth on leaves could be a number of things but is likely “sooty mold”. Sooty molds are found on plants that are infected with aphids, scales, psyllids, and a few other insects that feed on the juices of plants. The insects secrete a sweet, watery, waste product called “honeydew”. Sooty mold, in turn, lives on honeydew. Sooty mold lives on the surface a plant, so isn't actually infecting a plant, but if sooty mold covers too much of the plant, the plant's ability to photosynthesize is reduced and the over-all health of the plant can be impacted. The fig tree's fruit is safe to eat.

Here are a few additional resources on figs:

- An introduction to growing figs in Florida: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/mg214>
- Common fig tree diseases in Florida: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/PG/PG01000.pdf>
- Fig rust in Florida: <http://blogs.ifas.ufl.edu/leonco/2017/09/18/fig-leaves-dropping-early/>

Question: My papayas have a fruit fly infestation. This is the second year. Do I need to cut down the tree, or just remove the fruit and hope that next time is better?

Answer: There are a few different types of fruit fly that infest papayas in Florida, the most common of which is called the papaya fruit fly. The papaya fruit fly looks similar to a small wasp. Regardless of type of fruit fly infesting your papaya, the solution is the same. Fruit flies lay eggs in fruit. When the larvae (maggots) hatch, they eat the flesh and seeds of the fruit and quickly mature into an adult fly, which then lays eggs in a fruit, and so on in an endless cycle. The key to controlling infestations of fruit flies is to prevent the adult fruit flies from laying eggs in the fruit.

The most common way that home gardeners protect their developing papaya fruits is to enclose the fruits in one of three things: paper bags, newspaper, or pantyhose! As soon as the flower falls off the fruit, enclose the fruit with one of these items and tie it off so that the flies can't find their way in. This will not affect the ripening of the fruit.

It is equally important to properly dispose of any fallen fruit – flies are just as happy to lay eggs in a fruit that is no longer attached to a tree. As soon as you see a fallen fruit, pick it up and dispose of it in the garbage, garbage disposal, or compost. If you are composting fallen fruit, make sure that the fruit is buried deep in your compost pile so that the flies cannot access it.

Here are a few additional resources on papayas:

- Tips (with pictures) for preventing fruit flies from laying eggs in your papaya - <https://www.growables.org/information/TropicalFruit/PapayaGardenForum.htm>
- Papaya fruit fly - <https://www.growables.org/information/TropicalFruit/PapayaGardenForum.htm>
- Growing papaya in Florida - <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/mg054>

Feel free to reach out with questions any time!

University of Florida/IFAS Extension Sarasota County

6700 Clark Road, Sarasota, FL 34241

Office: 941-861-9900

Email: sarasota@ifas.ufl.edu

Web: sarasota.ifas.ufl.edu or scgov.net



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