OSU MG Study Group Diagnostic Show-and-Tell Highlights: February 5, 2018

Prepared and photographed by Elizabeth Price

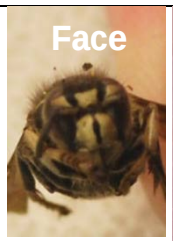
Join our friendly OSU MG Study Group on the first Monday of each month from 1 to 3 pm for Diagnostic Show-and-Tell. Have fun while learning! We explore bugs, diseases and more. Below are a few samples of what MGs brought to our last session.

For more information contact Elizabeth Price: llgmicroeap@mindspring.com

Bald-faced hornet (*Dolichovespula maculata*) & nest

Nancy brought in this stunning piece of Vespidae architecture she collected this fall in her yard. Bald-faced hornets are actually lighter colored yellow jackets. All 7 or 8 species in the genus create these papery nests from a slurry of wood and saliva. A new nest is constructed each year—but for a few queens that overwinter in tree hollows and other voids, the entire colony dies at season's end, after which it is safe to procure the nest. They are considered beneficial insects but can be quite aggressive if they perceive a threat. So, keep your distance and, if the colony is in a busy area and must be removed while it is active, be sensible and call a professional for help. (NOTE: Paper wasp nests are made of similar material, but the hexagonal cells are exposed.)

For more information: Penn State Dept. of Entomology



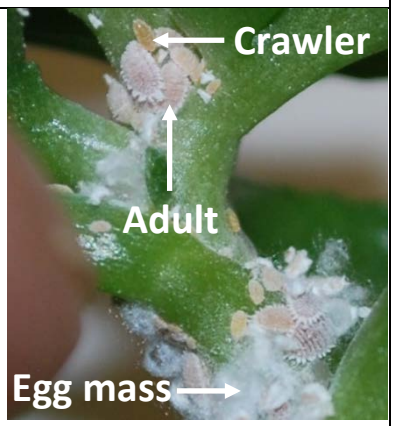
Bald-faced hornets are yellow jackets with cream-colored markings.

Mealybugs on *Kalenchoe* sp.

Joann brought in a house plant with a bad case of mealybugs. Many mealybug species lay eggs inside a cottony mass. Eggs hatch into shiny crawlers (nymphs) that move about until they find suitable spots to plunge their piercing-sucking mouthparts. Once they begin feeding they exude a waxy coating, which protects them from desiccation and insecticides. In the cozy environment of a home, there can be many generations a year; as such they can be difficult to control or eradicate. Some Master Gardeners have had success covering the soil with plastic wrap and then swishing the plant upside down in a tub of soapy water. Joann is going to toss hers in the garbage.

For more information: Cornell Insect Diagnostic Lab

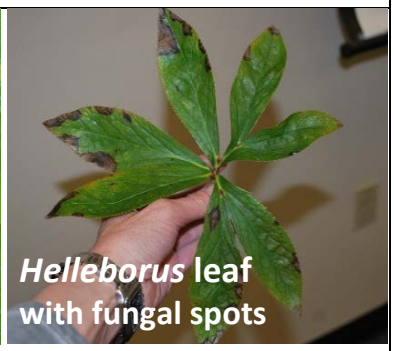
Mealybugs in all stages of their life cycle: egg, crawler (nymph) & adult



***Helleborus* with leaf spot (*Coniothyrium hellebori*)**

The leaves of Margaret's Hellebore are infected with this all too common fungal disease known for spreading rapidly in wet weather. Individual spots grow in concentric rings. Hellebores are a welcome sight when they begin flowering in January. Unfortunately, the disease also infects flowers and flower stalks, sometimes causing stem collapse. There is no recommended chemical treatment. The best cultural control is to remove last season's leaves before the flower stalks appear.

For more information: PNW Disease Handbook



Insect-egg slime mold (*Leocarpus fragilis*) on leaves & pine needles

Elizabeth discovered this curious organism under a tree in her yard. Luckily, our resident MG plant pathologist, Ginny, had seen it before and called it out as a slime mold. The orange sacks are spore-releasing fruiting bodies. Slime molds are harmless, fascinating life forms once thought to be fungi. There are hundreds of species in a phantasmagoria of shapes and colors. Some are capable of collective behavior described as intelligent by many scientists.

For more information:

University of California Museum of Paleontology Scientific American