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Problem: Plum curculio - *Conotrachelus nenuphar*

Hosts: Plums, apples, cherries, peaches and other stone fruits. It can also attack wild plum, hawthorn and native crabapples.

Description:

The adult is a beetle with a prominent snout that is equal to about 1/4 of the body length. Total body length is about 1/5 of an inch. The tip of the snout has biting jaws.

The larva is a white, legless grub that is about 1/3-inch long. Larvae are normally found inside the fruit they feed on.

Plum curculio overwinters as adults beneath trash under trees, along fence rows, under brush piles and in other protected places. Adults become active about the same time that apples bloom and begin feeding on buds, blossoms, and newly set fruit. The female will not only feed on developing fruit but will also lay eggs inside small cuts she has made to the fruit skin. The tiny, white egg is pushed to the bottom of these cuts by use of the female's snout. She then cuts a crescent-shaped slit that extends under the egg so that the egg is left in a flap of flesh.

One female is capable of laying from 100 to 500 eggs. Developing larvae feed on the fruit until they are ready to pupate. They then leave the fruit and burrow into the soil several inches deep and pupate. Damaged fruit will often fall early. New adults appear

in midsummer and feed on the fruit on the ground until cold weather forces them into hibernation.

Recommendations:

Removal of trash under trees and other sites that adults use to overwinter will reduce adult populations. Also, dropped fruit should be cleaned up in early June so that adults don't have a ready food source.

Stone fruits such as peaches, plums, cherries, and apricots, treat with an insecticide at petal fall and 10 days later. Apples and pears should be treated at petal fall and twice more at 10-day intervals. Products labeled for control include Lambda-cyhalothrin (Bonide Fruit Tree & Plant Guard) and Malathion.

References:

1. Plum Curculio, Cornell University Extension Service
2. Insect Pests, A Golden Guide, pg 125

Last Update: 10/4/2023

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