

# Ooh, that smell

## These aren't just bugs, they're smelly ones

By Alex Seise

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The summer of gypsy moth caterpillars has yielded to the fall of another annoying insect infestation.

Swarms of stink bugs - inch-long Asian invaders that emit a skunky smell and can really live up to their name if you squash one - are trying to find warm places in the region for the winter.

"I find these bugs all over my house and everywhere I go," complained Christina Hadgimallis of Horsham. "They don't try to get away when you go to kill them. They look like they are drunk when they fly and crash into the wall."

The unwelcome visitors, brown marmorated stink bugs, are searching for warmth, experts say. Large numbers of the bugs cluster on homes and buildings, trying to pry through cracks and gaps.

"I find about 15 in the house each day, not to mention all of the dead bodies in the window," said Hadgimallis.

The marmorated menaces were first reported in this region in Allentown in 1996, where they probably arrived in a freight shipment from Asia. By 1999, they had spread into central New Jersey. Now they're plentiful in the Philadelphia suburbs and the eastern third of Pennsylvania and have been sighted in 15 of New Jersey's 21 counties.

George Hamilton, a Rutgers University professor and pest management specialist, said the bugs are moving south and west, flying on their own, and hitching rides with human travelers.

They don't bite and pose no human health threat. But, like gypsy moth caterpillars, they eat vegetation. They like apples, pears, peaches, butterfly bushes, beans, honeysuckle, grapes, citrus and raspberries, Hamilton said. They'll also eat ornamental plants.

The region already has a native stink bug, called the harlequin. Harlequins have red-and-black patterns on their backs. Marmorated stink bugs are bigger, brown and have white-striped antennae. Both marmorated and harlequin stink bugs have hideous smells.



*Kyle Green / The Roanoke Times*  
*Brown marmorated stink bugs can really live up to their name.*

Experts say the best way to discourage stink bugs from moving indoors is to caulk exterior cracks and mend ripped screens.

If the bugs get inside, experts advise using a vacuum cleaner.

Christina Hadgimallis said the main thing is not to squash them.

Her advice: "Let them crawl on a tissue and then flush them."

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