
IMPORTANCE OF DELAYED SPRING GARDEN CLEAN UP



Stick insects, as you know, are masters of disguise. After mating, the females drop more than 100 eggs from treetops that free-fall to the ground where they will overwinter in the leaf litter until spring.

Small carpenter bees are small, metallic bees who nest in the pithy stems of plants over winter such as the canes from raspberries and blackberries or Spirea and Aster stems. Photo shows them sheltering inside a goldenrod cross section.

OVERWINTERING INVERTEBRATES

Dead stalks, grasses, and leaves provide habitat for many insects in the winter months. While dead seed heads provide a food source to overwintering and migrating birds. It is best to wait as long as you can to do spring clean up because of this. Consider leaving your yard and gardens as they are in the fall and refrain from cutting back and discarding of any dead material. If this isn't feasible, consider dedicating one area.



Bumble bee nests are often found in loose undisturbed soil beneath woody plants, tall grasses, or other dense vegetation. Luna moths overwinter in cocoons insulated in a pile of leaves while hawkmoths burrow and pupate underground. Eastern swallowtails camouflage their chrysalids as a dried leaf or a broken twig anchored from a dead flower stem. Other insects such as fireflies, spiders, and beetles seek shelter in leaf litter and rock piles or brush. These are just a few examples of insects that will benefit from delayed garden clean up.



Ideally home gardeners should wait to clean out their gardens until it's time to mow regularly or the pear trees have stopped blooming. If possible, it is even better to wait until apple trees are blooming because mining and bumble bees will be the first to emerge and enjoy apple blossoms here in Pennsylvania.

Consider putting the pruners away, leaving the leaves, and letting the insects do the work for future success of their generations and your garden alike.
