

QUEENSLAND FRUIT FLY COMMUNITY UPDATE

Advice to home gardeners

It is winter, but sizable numbers of Queensland Fruit Fly (QFF) adults may still be alive in warm refuges such as lemon trees near houses. These are the flies that will start the population explosion next spring.

Unless host fruit has fallen into a warm location most immature fruit flies (eggs and larvae still inside their host fruit or their pupae which may remain in their host fruit or, more likely, in the soil under the tree they developed in) will die during the winter, however there will be some that survive. This is called overwintering and will be the cause of next year's urban and rural fruit fly problems. These flies are typically newly bred flies from late-ripening fruit that have found themselves in localised warm spots.

Simple steps to protect next season's harvest

While QFF eggs, larvae and pupae are unlikely to survive the winter in the Goulburn Murray Valley (GMV) from this point, it is advisable to pick up fallen fruit and harvest late-hanging fruit in case they are situated in a position that is warm enough for survival.

It is important not to simply collect this fruit and throw it onto the compost heap. Quite a lot of heat is given off as microorganisms break down organic waste and QFF can survive here. It is best to cook, freeze, incinerate, mulch or solarise this fruit.

You will get a good indication of the presence of overwintering fruit flies in your garden by placing out food-based fruit fly traps. In winter these traps should be placed in a spot that catches the morning sun. They are best placed high in the canopy of evergreen trees in the warmest position in the yard. Lemon trees are particularly favoured by QFF to overwinter in.

If food-based traps catch flies you can apply fruit fly baits which should control the flies. If you have fruit nearby that is ripe or ripening at this time you could cover them with netting or remove them.

If your garden is one of the few hot spots for QFF, and this is evidenced by finding flies in traps in May/ June, you can help stop flies surviving the winter and building up into damaging populations in the spring. It is these flies that then spread into neighbouring gardens and commercial orchards. Speak to your QFF Co-ordinator or local produce store representative for further information and advice.

Fruit fly populations

The 2018/2019 QFF population was significant in that it was the lowest it has been since the beginning of the GMV QFF Area Wide Management (AWM) project. Weather played a part in this decrease but was not the sole factor. The GMV AWM project played a significant role along with increased public awareness and tree removal programs. It is now very important that this success is maintained with continued and improved diligence in home gardens, commercial areas, council and Crown lands and orchards.

For more information on QFF control, collect an information pack from your Council's Customer Service Centre.

Funded by the Victorian Government's Managing Fruit Fly Regional Grants Program

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Let's stop Queensland
Fruit Fly

