Have you seen this?

Camouflage looper

Rose petals walking—or rather creeping like an inch worm—means a camouflage looper is trying to sneak by. This caterpillar covers its body with plant fragments to disguise itself. Only the looper’s gray head and end are exposed. Fragments of plants are attached with silk. When the petals wither, they’re replaced with a bright new wardrobe. Petals don’t always match the plant it is currently crossing, but apparently the disguise still works. The caterpillar metamorphosizes into a **wavy-lined emerald moth**, colored spring green with white scalloped lines, similar to a luna moth but much smaller—less than an inch. This is a curious insect and does not require control.

September Tips

- **Winter cover crops** can be planted now on bare garden soil. Sow the following species individually or in combination: hairy vetch, winter rye, oats, or winter wheat.
- **Scale insects** can infect many woody plants. You may notice leaves coated with black sooty mold, a fungus that grows on excess plant sap (honeydew) excreted by the scales. Control them with a dormant oil spray in the fall if the problem is severe.
You may observe snakes in the landscape. They should be left alone. If the snakes are in your house, gently place them in a box or a trash can and release them outside. Watch our snake videos!

More seasonal tips

Featured Video

Montgomery County Master Gardeners - Demonstration Garden

Check out this great profile video of the Montgomery County Master Gardener’s Derwood Demo garden produced by the Montgomery County Council. They are growing so many different and interesting crops.

Watch on YouTube

By Jon Traunfeld

Have you seen this weed?

It’s buffalo burr (Solanum rostratum), an annual plant, member of the nightshade family, and native to the Great Plains. We had reports from Kent Co. and Baltimore Co. gardeners this summer who reported it growing in places where purchased bird seed had dropped to the ground. It’s very possible that some commercial bird seed is contaminated with buffalo burr seed. The spiny fruits (burr) contain the small dark brown seeds. This is a nasty weed that should be removed immediately. Do not let it go to seed. It is not listed as a noxious weed by the Maryland Department of Agriculture so it’s up to all of us to be vigilant and prevent this weed from establishing in Maryland.

More info:

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension info on buffalo burr
Buffalo burr info on illinoiswildflowers.info
It looks like some caterpillars have feasted and made Swiss cheese of my kale. What is the best earth-friendly way to remove them?

This is the cross-striped caterpillar, one of several caterpillars that feed on kale. Control is similar to other caterpillars such as the cabbage looper and the imported cabbageworm.

- Inspect transplants carefully. Camouflaged larvae are hard to spot.
- Use floating row cover, if this is a yearly pest.
- Hand pick and destroy larvae.
- Bacillus thuringiensis (Bt), an organic pesticide, can be used to control young caterpillars. Neem is also effective.

Have a plant or pest question? University of Maryland Extension’s experts have answers!

Send in your questions and photos here.

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