

Tracking the kudzu bug in Maryland

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A group of researchers at the University of Maryland is spending the summer tracking the latest invasive pest to threaten crops and aggravate homeowners along the East Coast – the kudzu bug.

The olive-brown bug, measuring less than ¼ inch in size, is a species native to Asia that typically feeds on kudzu vines and then migrates to soybeans and other types of available beans. It was first discovered in the United States in Georgia in 2009 where it caused significant losses for soybean farmers and has been gradually traveling north ever since.

Dr. William Lamp, a UMD entomology professor, is leading a team of researchers studying the bug's presence in this state. Earlier this summer, the team detected the kudzu bug in five southern Maryland counties including Anne Arundel, Calvert, Charles, Prince George's and St. Mary's.

"We haven't been finding huge populations but that might be due to the fact that it's just new here," says Alan Leslie, a graduate student working in Dr. Lamp's group. "The potential is there for (the kudzu bug) to be an economic pest but now that we know for sure it's here, we'll have to do further studies and figure out how big of an impact it will have."

The pests in Maryland have all been collected on kudzu, not on soybeans, but the Maryland Department of Agriculture is encouraging soybean growers to watch for the pest and to learn about appropriate pesticides that can help control it. The pests in Maryland have all been collected on kudzu, not on soybeans, but the Maryland Department of Agriculture is encouraging [soybean](#) growers to watch for the pest and to learn about appropriate pesticides that can help control it.

Much like the Brown Marmorated Stink Bug, the [kudzu bug](#) can also be a nuisance to homeowners. When crushed, it can stain surfaces, cause [skin irritation](#) and emit an unpleasant odor. The insects are most likely to try to invade homes in the early spring and fall.

UMD researchers will be monitoring sites all over the state throughout the duration of the summer to determine whether the [pest](#) could be as

problematic for Maryland as it has been in other parts of the country.

"We still don't know the extent of the insect inside of Maryland," says Leslie. "There is concern that it has the potential to hang around and for the populations to increase but we just don't know yet. We need to take a closer look."

More information: Information for growers is available at www.kudzubug.org/grower.html

Tips on how to keep kudzu bugs out of your house can be found at: www.kudzubug.org/homeowner.html

Provided by University of Maryland

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