

## PEST CONTROL BULLETIN NO. 22

# MAYFLIES



Nymph



Adult

### GENERAL INFORMATION:

Mayflies (Order Ephemeroptera) are delicate seasonal insects appearing in late spring and early summer. The adult stage is often mistaken for mosquitoes because of their size and association with either standing or running water. Unlike mosquitoes, mayfly adults do not bite, lacking functional mouth parts, they are also unable to feed. They live only a few hours or days at the most. Some species appear spontaneously in huge numbers and just as quickly disappear.

Mayflies are distinctive insects easily recognized by their elongate wings held upright over the body, typical long forelegs (front legs), and characteristic long paired (some species with three) tail filaments extending rearward from the tip of the abdomen. Mayflies vary greatly in length from small species less than ¼ inch in length to “giants” that exceed 2 inches. Colors vary greatly among mayfly species, but most are colored in tans, browns, yellows and greens with dark markings. The prominent forewings (front pair) are usually clear or tinted with an amber to smoky color. An additional feature of mayflies is their large eyes that are subdivided in a large top and small side pairs.

### LIFE CYCLE:

Mayflies are considered aquatic insects with the immature stages, nymphs (naiads), developing in

either still or running water. Most nymphs are easily recognized by the presence of usually 3 tail (caudal) filaments, a single tarsal claw, and gill plates on the sides of the abdominal segments. Their diet consists largely of algae, detritus, and other available organic food materials scraped from the bottom, including the surfaces of rocks, gravel, sand grains and rooted aquatic vegetation. Hatching from eggs during the winter, nymphs slowly develop and molt many times until they reach maturity in the spring.

### ECONOMIC AND MEDICAL IMPORTANCE:

Mayflies become a nuisance when they emerge in large numbers from nearby flood channels, detention basins, lakes, ponds, and rivers during the spring and early summer. Their presence at lights, on walls, and resting in vegetation invariably attract the attention of homeowners who mistakenly consider their presence as a source of public health concern

### CONTROL:

These insects are completely harmless and, in time, their numbers will decrease in a matter of days to the point where they will become hard to find. Because of their “here today and gone tomorrow” passage in nature, there is no real need to control the adults with pesticides. Many times, the adults will die of natural causes rather than from residual action of pesticides applied to the surfaces of walls and landscape vegetation.



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