

Debugging After Irma

Written by Louise Hodges
Tuesday, 03 October 2017 13:54



Hey, did anyone notice a hurricane recently? And has anyone noticed that mosquitoes and other pests are suddenly *really* bad?

We all know that hurricanes create all sorts of stress and damage. Not only have we dealt with the destruction but these massive storms also spur incredible growth in pest populations. Mosquitoes, fire ants, and roaches are now at much higher numbers and will remain prevalent for some time. Thanks, Irma - it's like a gift that keeps on giving.

Why and how does a hurricane create more bugs? Primarily due to the two elements of a hurricane - the destructive forces of water and wind.

Let's start with water because water and bugs go hand in hand. Bugs need water to procreate and where you have lots of water (especially in temperate climates like ours), you have lots of bugs. Yes, we have a slew of bugs here because it is humid, warm and we have plenty of rainfall.



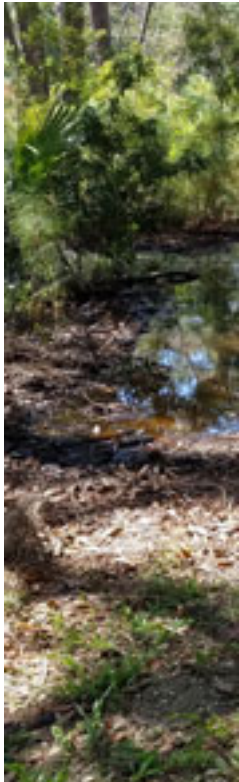
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We have all decided we love our slice of Lowcountry paradise but unfortunately, this environment nurtures pests. These bugs flourish here under normal circumstances. Throw in a hurricane and a once-in-a-decade (or longer) tidal surge and now you've got pest populations multiplying exponentially!

Before Irma, our ground was saturated. After all that rain, standing water abounds. Everywhere a tree or shrub has blown over leaves a "root bowl" in the soil for water to collect. Drainage ditches are still holding water. Piles of mangled tree limbs, reeds, and other storm debris prevent the soil underneath from drying out. If bugs need water to procreate, then the post-hurricane Lowcountry is pest utopia!

Yet there is more to it than just rainfall and subsequent standing water. Remember that



incredible tidal surge? That amazing volume of water that just kept coming, and coming? Well, that tidal water rose up and gave permission to a gazillion dormant salt-marsh mosquito eggs to hatch. They wait patiently for the right conditions and when a hurricane like Irma shows up, it is *Game On* for a mosquito population explosion.

(FYI, salt marsh mosquitoes are bigger, super aggressive, and are constantly active. They are a

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24/7 menace that leave extraordinary welts behind. Yippee...)

There has been an explosion of fire ant nests since Irma. The rainfall flooded the saturated ground so all the fire ant nests had to boil up to the surface. Thanks to Hurricane Irma, fire ant nests were exposed and they are more numerous and angrier than ever. You have been warned.

The other destructive power of a hurricane - wind - causes pest populations to surge. Habitats are destroyed for all living creatures. The destruction from wind rips branches, leaves, Spanish moss, roofs, docks and structures apart and then scatters it all over like a massive debris blanket.

Then we humans - as worshippers of order - take Nature's wreckage and place it into piles. Big piles and little piles all waiting for something or someone to intervene and take it away at some point . . . or not.

By losing their previous home, bugs are then compelled to re-populate the new surroundings. The gazillion piles of debris create the perfect welcome mat. If you were a palmetto bug, wouldn't you think you'd hit the jackpot landing in a pile full of twigs, Spanish moss, and miscellaneous trash? Bingo - let the procreating begin!

Yet another hurricane related reason bugs are so prevalent now is because "Man" mistakenly thought bugs were under control. Between aerial spraying of toxic, chemical pesticides and ongoing lawn and garden treatments, humankind was lulled into thinking it had a handle on pests. Nope, Nature wins again. Any form of barrier pest control was washed or blown away thanks to Irma.

Ugh. So, what can be done about it? The simple answer to control pests is to eliminate breeding grounds.

First thing first, get rid of ALL standing water! Fill in holes in the ground, make sure water drains away. Make sure you don't have forgotten mosquito breeding grounds like saucers under

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your pots or standing water at the base of your downspouts.

Get rid of debris piles. And don't just throw stuff in the wooded lot next door because that merely moves the breeding 20 feet away. Truly get rid of it. Go to the dump, burn it (following correct burning protocol of course), compost it, haul it elsewhere or



whatever. Just get rid of it.

If you want to establish an Earth-Friendly barrier to keep bugs at bay, consider Greenbug. Greenbug products protect you and your pets while a Greenbug System automatically disrupts pest breeding on your entire property. Greenbug uses Nature's own pest control ingredient of cedar - just like cedar chests and closets where you never see a bug - to control many pests including mosquitoes, fire ants and roaches.

When you notice over the next few months that pests are more prevalent, we have Hurricane Irma to thank. Eliminate the pest breeding options and then you'll notice a big difference.

Louise Hodges and her husband Dan are the owners of Greenbug, Inc. www.greenbugallnatural.com They provide alternatives to toxic, chemical pesticides using Nature's ingredient of cedar. She invented the Greenbug System that automatically creates pest-free properties via an irrigation system. She loves the outdoors, beneficial pollinators and college football.