

TAR SPOT AND ASIAN GIANT HORNETS

by Lyn Chimera

Recently we have had many calls about maple tree leaves with black spots and people spotting the 'Murder' Hornet.

Tar spot on Maples *(Adapted from Cornell Fact Sheet)*

WNY is experiencing an increase in tar spot this year. There are several different fungi in the genus *Rhytisma* that infect the leaves of maples (and sycamores) that cause raised, black spots to form on upper leaf surfaces. The diseases are called "tar spots" because their appearance so closely resemble droplets of tar on leaf surfaces. Tar spot alone is rarely serious enough to threaten the health of trees, but sometimes there can be so many spots that the tree becomes unsightly. Heavy infections can also cause early leaf drop, which causes the greatest consternation to homeowners because lawns are littered and must be raked before autumn officially arrives.

The best way to control the spread of tar spot is to rake up and remove all infected leaves. Spraying of fungicide is not recommended since tar spot doesn't severely harm trees.

Note: If maple leaves crinkle and turn brown in June or July, another common disease of maple may be present. Refer to the Cornell fact sheet on "Anthracnose of Trees and Shrubs" for more information. *(Editor: Tar spot also affects tulip trees and willow. Some studies indicate that tar spot is sensitive to air pollution caused by sulfur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide.)*

The Asian Giant Hornet (*Vespa mandarinia*) is the world's largest hornet at 2 inches long! It was initially spotted in British Columbia and Washington State in 2019. The nests found there were destroyed. This hornet is problematic as it attacks and destroys honeybee hives and is aggressive toward people. Because the Asian Giant Hornet looks like some large hornet and wasp species here, we are getting many calls of sightings of the "Murder Hornet." None have been confirmed.

Two of the most common insects people see here that they think are the Asian Giant Hornet are the German Yellowjacket (*Vespula germanica*) and the European

Giant Hornet (*Vespa crabro* L.)

The yellowjacket is colored in black and yellow and the abdomen typically has a small spade-shaped black mark on the first abdominal segment and a series of black spots down both sides from the second to the fifth segments. The adult European Hornet worker is approximately 25 mm in length with yellow and brown coloration.

Sharon Bachman, CCE Erie, explained that the visual difference between the Asian Giant Hornet and others is that the yellow and black bands on the AGH are solid stripes while the other large species have irregular stripes with "crown like" protrusions.

The bottom line is that the Asian Giant Hornet has not been identified outside the northwest.



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