

Chaucer's Spring!



**"When in April the sweet showers fall.
That pierce March's drought to the root and all
And bathed every vein in magic liquid that has power
To generate therein and sire the flower;"**
(translated from Middle-English, 14th Century)

In Geoffrey Chaucer's prologue to "The Canterbury Tales", he used March and April as a harbinger of things to come, and as an opening to the awakening of seeds, trees and other living things after a long winter. The United Kingdom's weather is very similar to our own. In Oregon's case, however, it's been a much more dreary and wet winter compared to their climate!

Plants have begun to come alive and insects also have started to awaken in March. The carpenter ants are already active and the scouts are searching for food to nourish the colony. New life has also begun in their nests. Queen ants are laying eggs that will become swarming males and females in a short time. These will then find new environs and begin their own colonies. Many times these new reproductives find their way into our homes and become serious pests.

Overwintering eggs of certain moths and other insects are also beginning to hatch as their food supply becomes available. An early spring might give a greater opportunity for newly hatched immatures to survive. In pest species this could mean a greater outbreak that we humans will have to deal with.

Boxelder bugs are active now, mating and laying eggs that will produce a new generation of those unwelcome guests that cover the South sides of our houses in the fall of the year.

The future is not all bleak, however! Butterflies that grace our gardens are beginning to develop in the pupae in which they spent the winter, hibernating beneficial beetles are throwing off the sleep of winter and are becoming more active to assist us in keeping pests out of our gardens. Nature, in general, is telling us it is getting ready for another active summer of growth, reproduction and survival.

It is always interesting to see which insects are the dominant ones of the year. We get a pretty good idea of what species the spring weather has stimulated to develop in large numbers, by which insects are brought into the MG office by clients, and are examined by the Insect Committee.

Geoffrey Chaucer, in 14th century England, was a good observer who saw the magical power of the change in weather that stimulates the awakening of life in the spring. He left quite a legacy with his stories!

Have a wonderful gardening year!