

## Pests of the Last Frontier and Closer to Home

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I spent the last two weeks of June visiting my daughter in Anchorage, Alaska. Knowing the interests of both her parents, she arranged for us to visit local nature centers, botanic gardens, and other natural areas. For those of you who have never visited Alaska, prepare to be overwhelmed at the amount of colorful flowering plants everywhere you look.

Every trail was lined with native wild roses, poppies, asters, daisies, and bluebells, the state flower. The understory areas were filled with bunchberry, a member of the dogwood genus that gets only 8 inches tall. In the public areas of Anchorage, Seward, and Talkeetna, beds were filled with a riot of brightly colored annuals and perennials.

Local naturalists explained that the short summer season with its near 24-hour daylight periods encourages all plants to bloom pretty much all at once. So, while we here in southern Indiana need to plan carefully to have perennials blooming throughout the summer, in Anchorage, they really don't bother.

By the way...if you do visit Alaska in the summer, bring a night mask. It is ridiculously hard to fall asleep when midnight is as bright and sunny as noon.

Interestingly, I saw very little in the way of pest problems. No poison ivy, which made getting close-ups of native flowers easy. No ticks (season isn't long enough for them to survive), so I didn't have to worry about picking up hitchhikers while exploring. Of course, while we have to put up with white-tailed deer nibbling our gardens, they have to deal with moose eating the entire tree. And it was hard for me to make the switch in trail courtesy: when hiking locally, we tend to stay quiet so we can see wildlife, such as birds and the occasional deer. In Alaska, every trail head is covered with signs reminding folks to make lots of noise, so you don't accidentally sneak up on a bear.

When I returned home, I immediately scouted my garden, to see how things were looking. I noticed bagworms were thriving on my evergreens. The ones I saw were less than an inch long...still young enough for decent control. At this point of the year, I would spray infested evergreens with any of the synthetic pyrethroids: permethrin, bifenthrin, or cyfluthrin. These products work extremely well, and should control the bagworms with just one treatment.

Japanese beetles are also fairly numerous on my rose bushes, and inside the blooms of my rose-of-Sharon. Control of Japanese beetles is extremely difficult for several reasons. First, they don't all appear at once: from early June through the end of August, you can expect new beetles to emerge from the ground. Insecticides need to be sprayed every 7 to 10 days to keep the leaves coated with chemicals, or you can use a season-long systemic product, like imidacloprid. These products shouldn't be used on plants in bloom, in order to protect bees and other pollinators; this makes protecting summer-blooming roses difficult.

I'm glad to be home, even with the beetles and bagworms. And ticks. And poison ivy.

On second thought...where is my sleep mask? Heeeeeeyyyyyy bears!