

It's Miller time. After spending the day laboring in the yard under a hot sweltering sun, Miller time doesn't sound too bad. I certainly am not a teetotaler. After working all day under the scorching sun, I do on occasion enjoy a cool brew or perhaps a glass of iced tea; however, the "miller" time to which I am referring is not that refreshing.

I despise "miller" time involving *Agrostis ipsilon*. I have a hunch you, too, find this miller time annoying and repulsive. Interestingly, it is all in the name—miller. *Agrostis ipsilon* is better known as a miller, or sometimes people call them miller/moths. I don't know how these insects acquired this common name, but the fact is "miller" time has arrived.

Once again, we are plagued with these icky, dirty moths flying unexpectedly. Out they come when we open the mailbox; perhaps when we open the front door the first thing in the morning, a number of these filthy millers flutter out.

The classic example always takes place at night. Picture yourself opening the backdoor. The porch light is on. For a brief moment, while the door stands open, hordes of these critters fly indoors and head directly to the overhead lights. There, they flicker about in a drunken-like stupor, bouncing off the ceiling, the walls, and perhaps, even you. Every time they collide with something, yucky, powdery material falls from their bodies.

Chances are the miller/moths that we are presently seeing are the adult stage



of the black cutworm, *Agrostis ipsilon*. This cutworm is a major agricultural pest, particularly in the eastern part of the United States. The larva hides during the day and feeds at night on most vegetable seedlings and many important grains, cutting them down —thus the name cutworm.

This cutworm is primarily subtropical. It fails to survive winter except in the warmest areas of the U.S. In the spring of the year the larvae pupate into the adult miller/moths — those that we are presently seeing. These moths are migratory, and many are on their way to higher elevations such as the Rocky Mountains of Colorado.

The question might be, “How do we deal with these annoying pests?” If you swat them while they are flying about, they will likely stain lighter colored walls and ceilings. One could attempt to knock them down with an aerosol insecticide, but I have a better method — one that I learned long ago from my mother. Perhaps, you may even find this method somewhat entertaining; I certainly do.

During the evening hours, when these annoying millers are darting about the overhead lights in your home, partially fill a dishpan with water and add a little dish soap. Agitate the mixture creating suds, lots of suds. Next, hold the pan containing this sudsy mixture close to the light. As the millers fly about, you will be pleasantly surprised to see them dive directly into the soapsuds and drown. The reason for this strange phenomenon is that light attracts them. The soap bubbles reflect the overhead lights confusing the millers and causing them inadvertently to dive to a sudsy grave. This method of control is very effective, and as I said before, somewhat enjoyable — at least in a morbid way.

If you think this method of control is too much trouble, simply wait them out. Fortunately, millers will depart almost as quickly as they arrived. Then, you can bid farewell to “miller” time — at least to this particular “miller” time.