

**COASTAL GARDENER**

**Franklin Laemmlen, Ph.D.**

**Q:** Last year you published an article on worms in apples and a trapping system used to control them. Please publish it again. The information was helpful in reducing the number of wormy apples on my tree, but I have forgotten the recipe!

**A:** The problem to which you are referring is caused by the codling moth. This half inch long, gray-brown moth spends the winter as a mature larvae or pupa in bark cracks on your apple tree or in the leaf litter at the base of the tree. By the way, codling moths will also attack walnuts, large fruited crabapples, pears, plums, peaches, and nectarines. However, on the Central Coast their preferred host is apples. In the spring the worm or pupa completes development, and adult moths begin to emerge when apples are about “marble” size. One female can lay between thirty and seventy eggs – one egg each on a fruit or nearby leaf. On the Central Coast there can be two or three generations of codling moths per season. Therefore, apples can be attacked from the time they are “marble” size until they are mature.

It is important to try to control the spring (first) generation of moths as reducing this population will have a suppressive effect on moth populations for the rest of the year.

I have given the following trapping recipe to a number of persons, and the feedback on reduced numbers of wormy apples has been very positive. I use a half gallon milk carton, which has had two two-inch by three-inch holes cut in opposite sides about two inches from the bottom. Now make the following brew: Use one cup of apple cider vinegar, a third cup of dark molasses, an eighth teaspoon ammonia and enough water to make one and a half quarts of liquid. Place about a three-quarter inch of the brew into the milk carton. Hang the milk carton in your apple tree. For a large tree you will want to hang two cartons on opposite sides of the tree. Store the unused brew in the refrigerator.

The brew traps should be checked once a week, cleaned out and recharged with fresh brew. Keep the traps in the tree until the apples are ready to harvest in late summer or fall.

These traps attract both male and female codling moths and also will attract and catch armyworm and cutworm moths and some flies. Do not be discouraged if you catch only a few codling moths. Remember, one female can lay thirty to seventy eggs, and with these traps you'll have potentially thirty to seventy fewer wormy apples.

**Author's Note:** Even though the official temperatures were above thirty-two degrees F for most of March, there were several nights when there was enough cooling to cause ice to form on lawns, roof tops, and car wind shields. This radiation cooling causes a phenomenon I call "ground ice," and it caused freeze injury to many sensitive plants on the Central Coast. Freeze injured plants represent an opportunity and a challenge. You can take the opportunity to do a severe pruning on injured plants and, so-to-speak, cut them down to size or you can wait and see where new growth (buds) emerge and then carefully prune only the dead (frozen) twigs and branches from the injured plant.

Send your landscape and garden questions to: **The Coastal Gardener, 624-A West Foster Road, Santa Maria, CA 93455.**