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How Can I Rid My Cherries Of Worries?

Diane Alston

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ask A Specialist

A weekly question/answer column

How Can I Rid My Cherries Of Worms?

Diane Alston answers:*

Cherries with small, white worms inside really don't taste any different than cherries without worms; however, most people aren't keen on eating insect-infested fruit. The western cherry fruit fly is the insect that causes so much trouble for the small, red fruits. Here are some things you should know to help keep the worms away from your trees.

- The western cherry fruit fly is small with dark bands on its wings. It overwinters in the soil under the cherry trees.
- Adult flies emerge from late May to early June in northern Utah. Within 7-10 days, females can begin to lay eggs inside the ripening cherry fruits. The cherries must be straw to salmon colored and not hard and green before the flies can lay eggs in them. Once the eggs are laid, they hatch into little white worms that feed on the inside of the developing fruit.
- Contact your local county Extension agent to learn when to begin spraying cherry trees in your area. Then let your neighbors know and encourage them to spray as well to help keep the fruit fly populations down.
- Plant grass turf under your cherry trees. Better yet, place a plastic landscape fabric under the trees to help reduce or prevent the larvae in dropped fruit from moving into the soil where they will pupate for the winter.

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* Diane Alston is Utah State University Extension Entomology Specialist