

# A magnolia seed destroyer— *Leptoglossus fulvicornia*

by RAY TESSMER

In August of 1989 Harold Hopkins noticed a type of squash or “stink” bug on *Magnolia virginiana* that he suspected of feeding on the seed cones. A specimen was captured in Gaithersburg, Maryland on *M. virginiana* and taken to the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., for identification. (The Smithsonian does all of the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s entomological work.) A Mr. Froescher identified the insect as *Leptoglossus fulvicornia* (formally labeled *Leptoglossus magnoliae* in the 1910 *Proceedings, Entomology Society of Washington*, v. XII, p. 191.) The former name is more descriptive.

Harold was kind enough to send me another specimen (live, of course!) in order to write this article. It amused my fellow office workers, but I was afraid to squash it and see if it really “stunk.”

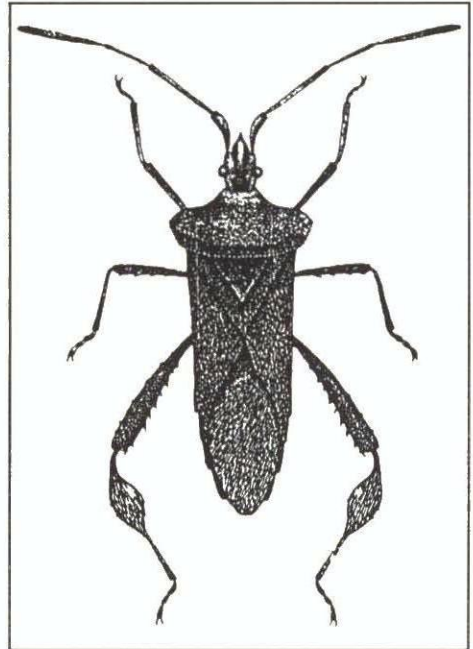
A sketch of the bug is shown. They are brown or gray and are quick runners if disturbed. Eggs (1 mm long) are laid in a string on the underside of magnolia leaves, and the nymphs which hatch from the eggs damage seed as they begin feeding. The larvae are red with black spines, legs and rostrum.

The squash bugs suck the fruit. Smaller fruit stung by them will drop. Larger cones cease growing on the side stung, while the other side keeps growing with the seed cone

becoming curved and crippled.

They will cast skins (molt) several times and turn into a mature adult. Besides magnolias, they like to suck on Russian apricots, although these are unrelated to magnolias.

Although this species is more confined to the southern states, it has been found in Massachusetts. Specimens were initially described from a tree in Washington, D. C., in 1889. 🐞



*Leptoglossus fulvicornia* as illustrated in 1910 *Proceedings, Entomology Society of Washington, Volume XII, Plate VII.*