

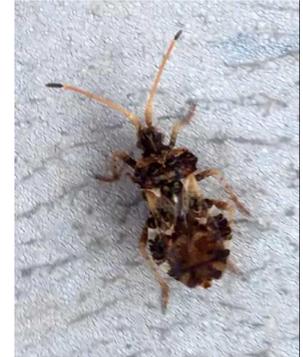
## Helpline Hot Topic for July 2020

### *Centrocoris variegatus* Kolenati 1845

by Cynthia Zimmerman

There's a new bug in our neighborhood. No cute name. Nothing that's easy to remember like squash bug, bed bug, lady bug, or leaffooted bug. Instead it's known as *Centrocoris variegatus* Kolenati 1845.

This is a bug that has never before been recorded in Fresno County. It was first detected in the city of Santa Clara in May 2009. Since that time it has been found in Yolo, Alameda, and Sacramento. It has not been spotted anywhere else in the United States except California, but is native to the Mediterranean area; being found throughout Europe, Canary Islands, Madeira, North Africa, the countries of Western Asia and the South Caucasus.



*Centrocoris variegatus* was first spotted in Fresno County by one of our own Master Gardeners who questioned what it was when she saw a number of them on the bolting spinach in her garden in May. Within a week the Helpline was contacted by a second gardener with the same bug. This time the bugs were in the seed clusters of the red beets that had gone to seed. They were also found hanging out on the leaves of the nearby chard below the immature seed heads, "as if waiting for the right time to get into the seeds." Another gardener contacted the Helpline to say he had noticed them on his mulberry tree the last two years and that once the mulberry was done fruiting, the bugs move to his tomatoes, destroying his crop.

Helpline became aware of this bug when the above gardeners asked for help in identifying it. We were unable to pinpoint the bug other than that it appeared to be from the Coreidae (leaffooted bugs) family though it didn't have the recognizable leaffoot. With the help of UCCE and Fresno County Agriculture entomologists and bug aficionados, it was finally identified and verified as *Centrocoris variegatus*, a bug brought to the attention of the CDFA (California Department of Food and Agriculture) in 2009.

There is very little information available about this particular insect; only some basic facts and a few pictures. The adult bug is  $\frac{3}{4}$ -1 inch long. The posterior lappet on the pronotum and spiny head differentiate this species from any other coreid bugs. Though it is in the leaffooted bug family, it does not have leaf-like expansions on its hind tibiae.

Since we know it is in the suborder Heteroptera (True Bugs) some information can be inferred. True bugs are defined by the mouthparts they possess which are modified for piercing-sucking. The nymphs are small versions of the adults except that they lack wings until about half-grown. The adults have two pair of wings which when folded overlap forming a defined X on the back. The eggs can be cylindrical, barrel, or keg shaped with one to several generations occurring in a year.

As a member of the family Coreidae (Leaffooted bugs) they are insects that feed on fruits, fruiting vegetables, nuts, ornamentals and particularly seeds. These bugs can overwinter in protected areas with major outbreaks occurring after mild winters. With warming weather in the spring, the adults start looking for food starting with seeds and moving on to crops in the garden and throughout the landscape. Most of the time leaffooted bug populations are small enough that any garden damage is negligible. A variety of management methods can be used should a major infestation occur. <http://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn74168.html>

Here's what you can do. We have been asked to help the Fresno County Department of Agriculture track *Centrocoris variegatus*. They will be compiling our information with theirs and keeping in touch with CDFA. If you happen across this bug please contact Cynthia Zimmerman at either the Master Gardener Helpline [mgfresno@ucdavis.edu](mailto:mgfresno@ucdavis.edu) or [ca\\_zimmer@att.net](mailto:ca_zimmer@att.net) with the following information.

1. Your name and contact information.
2. Where it was seen (address if possible, if not then zip code or general location such as cross streets)
3. Approximate date it was seen
4. What plant it was on and what it was doing
5. Estimate of the number seen.
6. Photo if possible

This is one more way the Fresno and Madera County Master Gardeners can serve the gardening community.