

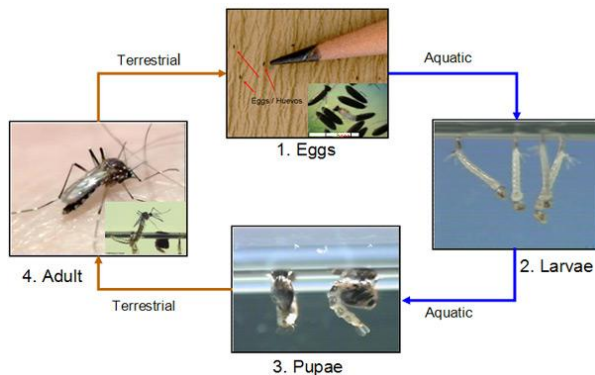
# Mosquitoes in Your Yard?

**If you have mosquitoes in your yard, answer the following questions before reaching for pesticides:**

- Have the mosquitoes in your yard seemed to have gotten worse in the last 10 years?
- Are you being bitten during the day, as well as around dusk and dawn?
- Are bites more common around your ankles and lower parts of your legs when you are standing or sitting?

If you answer yes to any one of those questions, a little investigation could save you a lot of time and money. Most mosquito complaints from homeowners can be traced to the Asian tiger mosquito (*Aedes albopictus*), that is one of North Carolina's worst mosquito pests. Originally, this mosquito was brought to the United States during the 1980s in used truck tires shipped from Japan, and the mosquito moved from state to state as those tires were moved. This species is highly adaptable and has become firmly entrenched throughout the southeastern United States. Not only a nuisance because of its aggressive biting habit, this mosquito has also been found to transmit West Nile virus and other mosquito-borne diseases.

The good news is that this is also the **easiest** mosquito to control. All mosquitoes need water to lay their eggs, and the Asian tiger mosquito prefers to lay its eggs inside containers that hold water. These can be man-made containers such as tires, tin cans, buckets, bird baths or clogged gutters. They will also lay eggs in natural containers, such as holes in trees or rocks. Cold



weather or drying out does not harm the eggs; when spring or summer rains flood the container, the eggs will hatch. During warm weather, it may take as little as a week for the tiger mosquito to grow from egg to adult. Even the smallest container, holding only about a half a cup of water, can be the source of hundreds of mosquito larvae.

The adult tiger mosquito does not fly far, so it is most likely to be found close to its breeding place. If you have mosquito problems in your yard, investigate first to see if you have Asian tiger mosquito breeding habitat! Share this information with your neighbors or home-owners' association and make this a community effort. After checking the area carefully, draining standing water, checking gutters and rain spouts, and eliminating breeding areas, you should see a reduction in mosquitoes in your yard within a few weeks.

**Figure 1: Mosquito life cycle** (image courtesy of CDC)

## WHAT THE ASIAN TIGER MOSQUITO LOOKS LIKE

The adult tiger mosquito is a small mosquito, only about an eighth of an inch long. It is black with white stripes on its legs and body, and a single white stripe down the center of its head and back. These stripes give it the name "tiger" mosquito.

## HOW TO CONTROL THE ASIAN TIGER MOSQUITO

The tiger mosquito doesn't fly far from its breeding place; water-filled containers must be nearby. The best way to control this mosquito around homes and businesses is to get rid of containers that can hold water. For items where water cannot be drained, check your local hardware store for products to kill mosquito larvae and follow label directions.

Some suggestions:

- Recycle or throw away trash and unwanted items.
- Prevent useful items from filling with water by covering them, turning them upside down, storing indoors, etc.
- Clean leaf-clogged gutters so they can't hold water.
- Check rain gutters, downspouts and underground drains to make sure they are angled correctly and do not hold water between rains.
- Change water weekly in outdoor containers like pet bowls, flower pot dishes or bird baths so that mosquito larvae won't have time to become adults.
- Stock ornamental ponds with fish that will eat mosquito larvae, such as mosquitofish (*Gambusia affinis*).
- Be sure that rain barrels have a cover that will prevent mosquitoes from entering and breeding.



**Figure 2: Asian Tiger Mosquito** (James Gathany photo, courtesy of CDC)

For more information, see the CDC "Fight the Bite!" website at [www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/prevention\\_info.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/prevention_info.htm).