

AG NOTES

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August 9, 2022

FARMERS MARKET

It's just now getting up to speed. We have a dozen or more vendors each week and they are bring some good produce and products.

The market is each Thursday afternoon at 2:30 at the pavilion next to the big blue water tower at the Celebration Grounds, across from Calsonic Arena. See you there.

WHAT IS THIS?



I never saw these flowers in East Tennessee. They may be there but my grandmother didn't have them. I think they are really neat since they surprise us with an overnight appearance, seemingly from nowhere.

They are actually called surprise lilies. Most of what I've seen are a soft pink and white color on a long stem. They have to experience cold weather, and then they put out leaves that I don't pay any

attention to or notice. But the leaves come out unnoticed and then go dormant, and the lilies then shoot up from the bulb.

There are some other colors available, but I've never seen them. The ones at our house were planted by someone a long time ago, but we have no idea who it was. I've attached a picture of ours. But these blooms are in a lot of places around the area. Pay attention to these treats.

AND THIS?

I mentioned earlier that we saw a moth that was orange and white. I had never seen this one before, and I thought it might be called a Vol Moth, or something like it.

Its name is a Regal moth. It looks really pretty and elegant. But I was shocked that its larval form is one I've seen over time and it's definitely not regal in appearance, not is its name regal. The larval or caterpillar stage is called a Hickory Horned Devil, and it looks like it. I've seen these before, but not often. Here's more about them from the North Carolina State Extension publication by Steven Frank et al. The photo is by Lyle J. Buss, Univ. of Florida.

The hickory horned devil, *Citheronia regalis*, is the largest caterpillar of the United States. Although it has a ferocious appearance, the hickory horned devil is harmless. This worm starts as a tiny caterpillar after hatching from one of hundreds of eggs laid by a regal moth. Over a matter of weeks, it grows and molts until it reaches its amazing mature size (almost 6 inches!).

The fully-grown hickory horned devil has a brown head, dark green body, black prolegs and numerous spines. Each body segment has four or more short, black spines around in a row around it. The two body segments toward the front have four long projections each that are brown at the base, black at the tip and curve back. These are the "horns" that give the caterpillar its ferocious appearance and name. The "horns" are sometimes $\frac{3}{4}$ inch long. Mature hickory horned devils crawl to the soil and dig in to form a subterranean cell in which they molt into a pupal stage. The shiny, dark-brown pupa is about two inches long (or even longer) and is somewhat cylindrical.

The fall, winter and spring is spent as a pupa in the soil. Next summer, the insect molts into the regal moth. Regal moths are large and have stout bodies. Females (wingspan up to 6 inches) are larger than males. The head and body are orange-red and yellow spots and markings. The wing veins are also red-orange. The dark areas between the veins are dull gray. The forewings of males are pointed toward the tips and narrower than the back wings.

Hickory horned devils are sometimes found on walnut, hickories, pecan, sweetgum, persimmon, and even sumac. The small caterpillars eat very small amounts of foliage, but the later stages consume considerable amounts of leaves. One reason that hickory horned devils are such a surprise is that they are actually kind of rare. In spite of their large and forbidding appearance, birds are apparently fond of them for food. Not only that, but parasites and diseases also kill a portion of the population.

Consequently, very few of the hundreds of eggs laid by regal moths successfully develop and produce offspring of their own. Because hickory horned devils are harmless to humans and are relatively rare, no control measures are needed.

I've attached pictures of both the adult moth that we saw and the caterpillar stage. Interesting.

