

# Bug of the Month - *Alert*

by Jim Revell / May 2016

## Zika Virus Alert



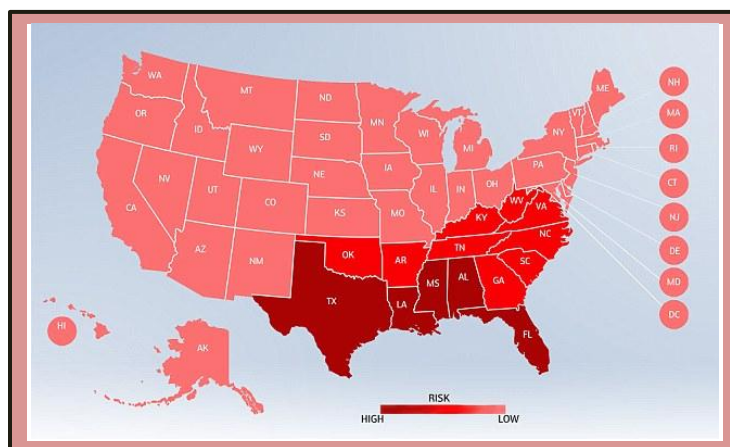
I am sure by now most of us have heard about the Zika virus and the concerns regarding its potential spread throughout the United States. The situation is of particular concern to pregnant women (and women of child-bearing age) as the virus is suspected to cause microcephaly, a brain deformity in newborn children.

The CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) is asking our U.S. Congress for a considerable sum of money in order to conduct more research, in the hopes of controlling the issue before it becomes an epidemic.

The mosquito species primarily responsible for the Zika virus is the *Aedes aegypti* (yellow fever mosquitoes), pictured above left, however, the virus can also be transmitted by the *Aedes albopictus* (Asian tiger mosquito). Both species are notorious for living and breeding near human dwellings. They are aggressive in feeding on humans. They feed during the day and, occasionally, at night in well-lit areas.

Both species are found in the U.S. and have been reported as far north as Ohio during summer months. An article (written by Larry White) published in [usa-ukonline.com](http://usa-ukonline.com) on April 2, 2016, reported that, to date, there have been more than 30 confirmed cases of the Zika virus in the U.S. (with 12 of those cases in Florida), and all, with the exception of one apparent transmission of the virus in Texas through sex (which is raising concerns according to the World Health Organization), infected after traveling to an affected country (to date, at least 25 countries and territories, most in Latin America and the Caribbean).

The same article indicates experts have warned we could see significant spread of the virus as temperatures rise and mosquitos become more active. The article included a map of the U.S. (see below) indicating levels of risk, High to Low, in shades of dark to light, with the darkest shade representing the highest risk.



The main vector, *Aedes aegypti*, cannot tolerate mild winters, so this should help limit their movement, however, all of this does mean we need to be vigilant in doing our part to help control mosquito populations.

## **Things we can do to help control mosquito populations (and, thus, help guard against the Zika virus):**

- (1) Be sure to empty all containers *regularly* that can hold standing water, i.e., empty flower pots, tires, birdbaths, pet dishes, gutters, etc.
- (2) Keep all windows and door screens in good condition.
- (3) When possible, wear long sleeves and long pants when outdoors.
- (4) Stay inside during early mornings and evenings when mosquitos are most active.
- (5) Maintain pools, spas, hot tubs, etc.; keep them covered when not in use.
- (6) Consider using insect repellent when outdoors.
- (7) If you use rain barrels or other systems to collect and hold rainwater, be sure to cover them with netting or use Summit Mosquito Dunks which contain BTI, a bacteria toxic only to mosquito larvae (last 30 days).

### Photo References:

Aedes aegypti: Aedes+aegypti-ZikaVirus2-10-16.jpg

Site: [http://msue.anr.msu.edu/news/zika\\_virus\\_concerns\\_for\\_michigan\\_residents](http://msue.anr.msu.edu/news/zika_virus_concerns_for_michigan_residents)

Map: 30D9A2C400000578-0-Exper...\_a-1\_1454629190973.jpg

Site: [www.newsusauk.com/news/237695-three-more-zika-virus-cases-confirmed-in-florida-as-governor-warns-people-to-prepare.html](http://www.newsusauk.com/news/237695-three-more-zika-virus-cases-confirmed-in-florida-as-governor-warns-people-to-prepare.html)

### Other Research References / Resources:

<http://npic.orst.edu/pest/mosquito/control.html>

[livestocktrail.illinois.edu/uploads/horsenet/papers/tips for mosquito control.pdf](http://livestocktrail.illinois.edu/uploads/horsenet/papers/tips%20for%20mosquito%20control.pdf)

Jim Revell is a Bedford Extension Master Gardener Volunteer.  
Read more of his articles on the "Jims Bugs" page @ [www.BedfordMasterGardeners.org](http://www.BedfordMasterGardeners.org)