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TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

Easy Gardening

INSECT CONTROL • INSECT CONTROL • INSECT CONTROL

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Many kinds of insects feed on garden plants. Insect pests damage plants in two ways. Some chew holes in the leaves, stems, roots or fruit, and some stick their beaks into the plants and suck out plant juices.

Insects attack garden plants at all times of the year. Some insects will feed on sprouting seed and young seedlings. Others feed on the growing plant or on the mature plant and its fruit.

Kinds of insects

The insects that feed on garden plants can be divided into two main groups: the sucking and the chewing insects. These are some of the most common insect pests and the damage they cause.

Sucking insects	Damage
Aphids	Suck juices from leaves and stems
Stink bugs	Suck juices from stems and fruit
Leafhoppers	Suck juices from leaves
Squash bugs	Suck juices from stems or vines
Whiteflies	Suck juices from undersides of leaves

Chewing insects	Damage
Grasshoppers	Eat entire leaves
Potato beetles	Eat holes in potato and tomato leaves
Flea beetles	Eat very small holes in leaves
Cucumber beetles	Eat small holes in leaves
Armyworms	Eat large holes in leaves and may eat fruit
Cutworms	Cut off plants at or below ground level
Cabbage loopers	Eat holes in cabbage, collards and broccoli
Corn earworms	Chew fruits of tomatoes and peppers and ears of corn

Recognizing insect problems

A good gardener must learn to recognize insect problems. To know when insects are damaging your plants, watch for anything that does not look normal.

The following symptoms will help you recognize insect problems.

1. Plants are stunted and do not grow properly.
2. Plants have deformed or damaged leaves.
3. Plants look yellow or light in color.

4. Plants look wilted and droopy

If your plants show any of these symptoms, examine each plant closely for insects. Also examine the soil near the plant base, as many insects drop and hide there when disturbed.

Controlling insects

Many insects can be managed without using pesticides, but this cultural control requires extra time and effort. It may also result in slight damage to your plants. Some of the cultural methods you can use to prevent or control insect damage are:

1. Keep weeds and grass pulled out of the garden. Mow the area around the garden.
2. Plant varieties that grow well in your area.
3. Apply the correct amount of fertilizer and water when needed.
4. When you have picked all the fruit, destroy the old plants by removing them or plowing them under.
5. You can wash off some insects, such as aphids and spider mites, with a water hose.
6. You may hand-pick some insects or egg masses from the plant to prevent damage.

Chemical control of insects often may be necessary. For best results, treat insects before large numbers build up in the garden. Dusts or sprays provide good control.

Before you buy a pesticide, read the label to see if it is recommended for the pest and plants you want to treat. Before you use a pesticide, read the label to see how much you should use. Read all information on the label and follow all directions.

All insecticides are poisonous, so handle them with care and keep them away from children and pets.

Some insecticides recommended for home vegetable gardens:

Conventional insecticides	Organic insecticides
Dibrom® endosulfan Kelthane™ malathion naled Sevin® sulfur	azadirachtin *Bt* (*Bacillus thuringiensis*) garlic juice extract neem oil pyrethrin spinosad

Acknowledgments

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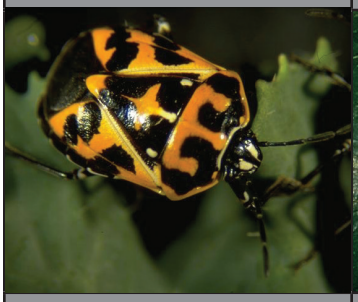
Aphid

Blister beetle

Cabbage looper

Flea beetle



Harlequin bug

Leaf hopper

Pill bug

Spider mite

Sweetpotato weevil

Wireworm (larva)

Click beetle
(adult wireworm)

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