

Post Rock Answers

By Cassie Homan July 15, 2022

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Got Bugs in Your Garden?

By the end of July our gardens are usually thriving and we are in harvest mode. Our veggies are fully grown and putting on delicious fruits for us to enjoy. Unfortunately, we aren't the only ones that love this season. Insects are out in full force in our gardens and landscape. Here are the top four pests you will likely see in your landscape and how to deal with them.

Squash Bugs

Squash bugs are the grey, shield-shaped bugs that feed mainly on squash and pumpkin plants. If you have ever had these pests in your garden, you know they are almost impossible to control when fully mature. This is because the squash bugs have a hard body that an insecticide has difficulty penetrating. It is very important to control the insects when they are small. High squash bug populations can literally drain plants causing them to die and wilt. Look for the eggs of the insect as well, adult females deposit brownish-red eggs in clusters on lower leaf surfaces.

When controlling squash bugs, use a general-use insecticide such as permethrin (Bug-B-Gon Multi-Purpose Garden Dust; Bug-No-More Yard and Garden Insect Spray; Lawn & Garden Insect Killer). Malathion, and methoxychlor provide control if a direct application is made to young, soft-bodied squash bugs. Remember when treating that you must spray or dust the underside of the leaves because this is where the insects live.

Spider Mites

If you have tomato plants in your garden, you will most likely have spider mites. Most spider mites like hot and dry weather and we are seeing populations start to explode. Check your plants for stippling on the upper surface of the leaves as well as some fine webbing on the underside of the leaves. If you think you have spider mites, hold a sheet of white paper beneath a leaf and tap the leaf. Mites will be dislodged and can be seen as tiny specks on the paper that move about.

Spider mite control can be challenging. A strong jet of water can be used to remove the mites but may not be as easy as it sounds. A high-pressure directed spray is needed to dislodge the mites. Since spider mites feed on the underside of the leaves, the spray is most effective if it comes from below. This can be difficult to accomplish with a thumb over the end of the hose.

Some gardeners use a water wand hooked to a shut-off valve. The water breaker is then replaced by a brass nozzle. Make sure to spray your plants multiple times.

Horticultural oils and insecticidal soaps (Safer's, for example) can also be helpful. Spray early in the morning when temperatures are cooler and plants have rehydrated.

Green June Bugs

Green June bugs have been out and about this season. The adults are about an inch in length, and velvety-green, tinged with yellow-brown coloration. The underside of the body is shiny and metallic green or gold. Adults fly like "dive bombers" over our lawns for several weeks in mid-summer.

The green June beetle has a one-year life cycle, and overwinters as a grub in grass. Adults emerge in late-June and are active during the day, resting at night on plants or in thatch. The adults sound like a loud bumble bee. Adults will feed on ripening fruits and may occasionally feed on plant leaves. The larvae, grub stage, feed primarily on organic matter including thatch and grass-clippings; preferring soils that are excessively moist.

If you have apricots, peaches, apples, pears, grapes, blackberries, or raspberries in your garden, keep a close eye out for this pest. Green June beetles are attracted to fruits and vegetables high in sugar content. If they are causing damage to your crops, use an insecticide like carbaryl (Sevin), acetamiprid (Ortho Flower, Fruit & Vegetable Insect Killer) or malathion (Bonide Malathion). Luckily, these beetles won't cause much trouble to our garden, but they do make their presence known.

Grasshoppers

Last but not least is everyone's favorite garden pest, the grasshopper. Grasshoppers may be one of the most difficult insects to control in our gardens. They are manageable if treated when they are young. Try a chemical such as Permethrin, it is a good choice for vegetable crops because it is labeled for a wide variety of vegetables. However, keep in mind that hoppers can re-infest an area relatively quickly. Carbaryl (Sevin) can also be used for grasshopper control, remember you may need to treat more than once.

If you are interested in organic controls, try a product such as Semaspore, NOLO Bait, HopperStopper, and Grasshopper Attack. These products are selective and will affect only grasshoppers. They are most effective against the immature stages rather than adult

grasshoppers. Also some grasshopper species are less susceptible than others. They can take 3 to 6 weeks to kill the grasshoppers after ingestion.

Remember, regardless of method used, the trick is to treat early before the population has matured. Young hoppers are much easier to control than adults and are also much less mobile.

Gardening in Kansas will always be a challenge with our spontaneous weather and the number of insects we have to deal with. Incorporating a few tips and tricks into your garden maintenance will insure a bountiful harvest. If you have any gardening questions, please call your local Extension office.

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