

Beneficial & Harmful Insects in the Garden





Beneficial Insects

Insect

What you need to know

Ladybug



Ladybugs are predators and eat many kinds of harmful insects. Ladybugs eat aphids (harmful pests) and can eat up to 60 aphids a day. Their larvae will not damage your plants either.

Attracted to: dill and fennel

Spined Soldier Bug



Spined Soldier Bugs are predators to caterpillars and beetle larvae as well as Colorado potato beetles and Mexican bean beetles.

Attracted to: Perennial flowers around garden beds. Keep plants well-watered for these bugs.

Tachinid Fly



These pollinating flies insert their larvae into harmful insects and the larvae eat the insect once hatched. They kill gypsy and codling moths, armyworms, cutworms, bollworms, cabbage loopers, Japanese beetles, cut worms, peach twig borers, sawfly, cucumber beetles, tent caterpillars, squash bugs, and many more.

Attracted to: dill, parsley, clover, and herbs

Braconid Wasps



They attach their larvae to the tomato hornworm and they eat and kill the hornworm. They also eat aphids, codling moths, garden webworms, and many different caterpillars, beetles, and flies. They will not sting unless they must.

Attracted to: Nectar plants with small flowers. Dill, parsley, and wild carrot.

Ground Beetle



These are nocturnal and get all the bugs on the ground. Slugs, snails, and aphids.

Attracted to: Compost and perennials. They also eat compost and create the living environment needed to help the compost deteriorate.



Harmful Insects

Insect

What you need to know

Aphids



Aphids are the most common plant pest. They suck out sap causing plant diseases and promote a sooty mold. They attract ants (which protect the aphids because they want honeydew- a sweet sticky substance secreted by the aphids.) Aphid affected plants will die without treatment.

Treatment: Wash plants with strong spray of water to dislodge aphids. Remove affected plant part. Use ladybug beetles or spray Neem or horticulture oil.

Cutworms



One-inch-long moth larvae that hide behind leaves within the top layer of soil during the day. It feeds at night as it attacks the stems. If seedlings have fallen like a tree in the forest, that is a sign of cutworms

Treatment: Make collars for young seedlings. You can wrap stems in plastic cups, cardboard toilet paper rolls, or aluminum foil to protect them. Cultivate soil before planting and remove curled up cut worms by hand or let birds do their job. You can also set seedling out when stems are thicker.

Japanese Beetle



Adult Japanese Beetles are metallic blue and bronze beetles about ½ inch long. The larvae are flat, white grubs with brown heads. Japanese beetles skeletonize leaves and chew flowers. Grubs feed on the roots of grass and other plants

Treatment for beetle: Shake into a jar of soapy water early in the morning when less active. Spray with insecticidal soap or use floating row covers.

Treatment for grubs: Apply beneficial nematodes or milky spore. Be patient, both these organic options take a couple of years to build up in soil.



Scale Insects



You may not notice scale insects, which look like bumps on plant stems, leaves or fruit. Males are small flying insects, while larvae are tiny soft insects. They suck sap, weaken plants, and cause foliage to turn yellow and drop off. This makes plants more susceptible to severe weather, disease, and other insects.

Treatment: Start by removing the pests with your fingernail, soft toothbrush, or a Q-tip dipped in rubbing alcohol. With a slight bit of force, most will easily detach. Rinse the plant with water.

You can use Neem oil, or horticulture spray on the entire plant from top to bottom (with either mixture), and wipe foliage clean with paper towels.

Slugs



Slugs are slimy, soft bodied, brown or grey mollusks about an inch long. They hide in shady spots during the day and feed at night and eat eat any garden plant. They like a rainy climate.

Treatment: Fill an empty tuna can with beer and place it in the garden. Slugs are attracted to the beer and will fall in and drown. You can hand pick the slugs and sprinkle them with salt or wood ash. You can crush seashells or diatomaceous earth around the stems of your plants to discourage slugs.

Spider Mites



These tiny pests are related to spiders and feed on plant juices. In large numbers, they zap a plant's vitality by causing leaves to turn yellow, brown, or gray and fall off.

Treatment: Introduce predatory insects that feed on spider mites (lady bugs, praying mantises, and assassin bugs). Mix a ½ cup buttermilk and 4 cups of wheat flour with 5 gallons of water. Spray on top and bottoms of foliage. Repeat in 10 days to take out any that hatch in the interim.



Squash Bugs



Squash bugs are most commonly found on squash plants and pumpkins. They are large, look as if they're wearing armor, and resemble stink bugs. They suck juice out of plants and cause wilting.

Treatment: Hand pick the squash bugs and drop in jar of soapy water. Clean up infested plants at the end of growing season and dispose of them in trash- this interrupts the squash bug's life cycle. Scrape off egg clusters (found on backside of the leaves) or spray Neem oil on the egg clusters and small squash bugs.