

Bugging out your garden!

Now that your garden is well underway, you can relax and enjoy it. But life may not be as rosy for your plants. Are insects nibbling on them? If you see telltale signs like damaged and discoloured leaves, you'll want to first identify what is causing the problem and then decide whether any action is needed. In some cases, when damage is only cosmetic and does not threaten the plants, doing nothing may be the right choice.



Slug on a hosta

(photo by Mary Ann Van Berlo)

Some pests are more easily recognizable than others. For example, slugs will create a silvery translucent trail on the leaves where they feed.

Leafminers make tunnels or blotches inside the leaf and you may be able to see, and squash, the insect larva through the pale nearly transparent part of the damaged leaf. Other pests are specialized and will zero in on

one type of plant, for example, the infamous lily beetle, the Colorado potato beetle, or various species of sawfly larvae that live off roses, pine trees or other plants. To eliminate many of these undesirables, I bring along a plastic container half-filled with soapy water and flick the insects in it as I do my garden inspection.

Once you become familiar with the recurrent pests and you can recognize the early signs, you will be ready to take action when the pest first shows up. For example, the early lily beetles, just waking up from winter, and still in slow motion on the soil, will be easier to catch. Later on, the rose sawfly larvae can be found on the underside of the leaves, so tiny at first that you could easily miss them. A spray of water will knock them off the plant or insecticidal soap can be used. Quick action has the double advantage that the pests have not had a chance to reproduce and little plant damage has occurred yet.



Rose sawfly larvae

(photo by Monique Paré)

Not all insects are pests. Dragonflies and ladybugs are well known garden friends and so are the lacewings, ground beetles and a wide variety of other insects. These beneficial insects patrol the garden and feed on many pests. Just yesterday, I encoun-

tered a parasitic wasp hunting in my flower beds, a very delicate insect with little resemblance to the yellow-jacket type. These tiny wasps search for insect eggs or larvae in which they lay their eggs to parasitize them. Many fly species will do the same.



Ladybug attacking aphids

(photo by Monique Paré)

Overall, there are so many useful bugs that I will give the benefit of the doubt to any six-legged creature until I can confirm it is a menace to my plants. One of my first reference books on the subject was Rodale's Color Handbook of Garden Insects (Anna Carr) but it is no longer offered for sale. You may be lucky and find a copy at the Library. A good start is the Canadian Wildlife Federation's web-site which has information on good bugs at

www.wildaboutgardening.org.

If you suspect your plants are under attack, don't bring out the heavy artillery until you have investigated the cause. Remember that pesticides will affect friends as well as foes among insects. Healthy plants and a thriving population of beneficial insects will provide you with a bountiful, vigorous garden full of life.

Monique Paré
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Trowel Talk!

- Newsletter of the Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton
- Volume 1, Number 7
- <http://mgottawa.mgoi.ca>
- trowel_talk_editor@rogers.com



Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton

Where to find us this month for free gardening advice!

ONGOING:

Telephone Help Line: 613-236-0034

- Wednesday and Thursday 1-3 pm

E-mail Help Line: mgoc_helpline@yahoo.ca

- monitored daily

- send photos of garden pests, diseases or plants for ID

CLINICS:

Children's Garden: 321 Main St., Leggett Park, Saturdays, July (10 a.m. - noon)

Lansdowne Market: Sundays, July through September (9 a.m. - 1 p.m.)

MGOC Plant Sale: Building 72, Arboretum, Central Experimental Farm, August 15 (9 a.m. - until sold out or 1:00 p.m.)

SPEAKING EVENTS:

Attracting birds & butterflies to your garden - September 1, 2010 - 7:00 p.m.

Speaker: Nancy Seppala, Master Gardener

Royal Canadian Legion, 177 George Street, Carleton Place

Hosted by Carleton Place & District Horticultural Society (guests welcome)

Seed Saving & Storage - September 8, 2010 - 7:00 p.m.

Speaker: Rebecca Last, Master Gardener

St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, 319 Prescott Street, Kemptville

Hosted by Kemptville Horticultural Society (guests welcome)

The Vertical Aspect of Gardening - September 14, 2010 - 7:00 p.m.

Speaker: Mary Reid, Master Gardener

Navy Veterans Association Club, 30 Sixth Street, Cornwall

Hosted by Cornwall & District Horticultural Society (guests welcome)



For information on arranging a lecture for your group: 613-836-1491

For more information on Master Gardeners, visit our website:

<http://mgottawa.mgoi.ca>

July TO DO List

- Deadhead regularly to stop invasive plants from self-seeding.
- Start collecting seeds of your favourite plants for sharing or for increasing your garden stock.
- Keep a photo record of your gardens so you can work on the design/plan over the winter. A good way to decide when & where colour or form is needed is to have a record of what the garden looked like throughout the season
- Keep an eye out for pests and diseases - you can always call or e-mail Master Gardeners for help with identification and solutions (our contact information is to the right).

Tip of the Month:

Earwigs seem to be the most popular (or is it least popular?) pest question this month on our help desk, so here are a few tips for dealing with them.

Traps - Earwigs are nocturnal, so when dawn arrives they look for a cool damp place to spend the day. Try placing a small piece of hose or a rolled up newspaper in the area where they are active. They will crawl into the "trap" for shelter. In the morning, shake the hose over a pail of soapy water. Or take the whole rolled up newspaper and throw it in a garbage bag and seal the bag tightly. Repeat daily.



Earwig (adult)

Diatomaceous Earth - Sprinkle diatomaceous earth around the

plants that are being attacked. Diatomaceous earth is sold under the product name "Insectigone". It is a form of silica that is completely natural. To quote Wikipedia: "The fine powder absorbs lipids from the waxy outer layer of insects' exoskeletons, causing them to dehydrate." It will need to be reapplied every week or after a heavy rain.

Neem Oil - Spray the affected plants with Neem Oil. Neem is not sold as a pesticide, it is sold as a foliar shine/polish for house plants. It is very bitter and will repel bugs. It is safe to use, but it would be prudent to wait a couple of weeks before harvesting any

food crops. It is derived from the Neem tree which is native to India. Make sure you spray under the leaves and on the flowers.

Plant Sale!

Sunday, August 15th is the date for Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton's annual plant sale at the Central Experimental Farm (Building 72, in the Arboretum). The sale starts at 9:00 a.m. and goes until the earlier of: 1:00 p.m. or when the plants are sold out. There will be an assortment of favourite perennials, shrubs and trees, as well as some unusual garden gems. Everything will be well-priced.