

MARYLAND Home & Garden

INFORMATION CENTER

May - June 2010

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The Home and Garden Information Center is celebrating its 20th year of outreach education. Since 1990 we have answered the questions and solved the plant and pest problems of tens of thousands of Maryland residents. Our mission is to help Marylanders grow sustainable landscapes and gardens that protect natural resources. Survey data show that people who get their information and answers from HGIC reduce dependence on chemical pesticides to solve pest problems.

HGIC is recognized as a national model for land-grant institutions and has been emulated by Clemson University and the University of Connecticut. Through the years we have stayed on the cutting edge of information delivery. We started a toll-free "hotline" in 1990; 800 numbers were the rage back then. We launched an award-winning web site in the mid-90s, and started our 24/7 e-mail Q&A service in 2001. Last year we started Twitter and Facebook pages that are viewed by over 1,000 people every week. And with the help of University of MD students we've been steadily posting YouTube video clips on many popular topics- with more coming in 2010!

Personalized service has always separated us from the pack. Marylanders who contact us consult with Certified Professional Horticulturists backed up by Extension Specialists. That's about as close as you can get to an actual site visit!

HGIC's educational services are more essential today than when we started because of our growing population and the need for us all to adopt "green" approaches in managing our private and public lands. HGIC's commitment to staying on top of current trends is exemplified by the popular Grow It Eat It campaign, started last year in partnership with the MD Master Gardener program.

Budget and staff reductions are a serious challenge for our small staff and faculty. As we weather the current economic down turn, we remain committed to using our resources to provide the best possible service to Maryland residents. I will keep you posted on how further cuts might affect operations.

Thanks for your continuing support,



HGIC Director



Call us at 800-342-2507 (in state) 301-531-1757(out of state)
or visit us on the web www.hgic.umd.edu

TOP

Let's Get Physical... (With Vegetable Insect Pests!)

*Jon Traunfeld, Extension Specialist, Fruits and Vegetables, and
State Master Gardener Coordinator*

Some organic vegetable gardeners are laid back when it comes to insect pests. They don't worry too much about all of the critters, large and small, that also like to eat their vegetable plants. And that may work for some pests, on some crops, in some years. But some insects will quickly reduce plant growth and leave you with a disappointing harvest unless you take some action.

Physical control of insects is one of the main techniques in the integrated pest management approach recommended by University of Maryland Extension. A fence that excludes deer, groundhogs, and other wildlife is a good example of physical control.

In this article we'll be looking at three effective methods:

- 1. Floating row cover.** This is a spun-bonded lightweight polypropylene material that is draped over plants to exclude insects and wildlife. It promotes faster growth in spring and fall by raising temperature and humidity under the cover. It is inexpensive and can be re-used. Buy the lightest weight row cover you can find- usually called "insect barrier". It will also transmit the most light. Hold the cover to the ground with soil, bricks, landscape pins, etc.
- 2. Hand-pick.** Squash pest insects and their egg masses. Yuck? Then wear plastic gloves or get someone else to do it. Or, instead of squishing the pests, you can sweep or drop them into a jug of soapy water made by cutting the top off a gallon milk jug. Success depends on close monitoring and persistence.
- 3. Particle barrier.** Dust plants with wood ash or spray with Surround, a wettable powder (kaolin clay) that you mix with water and apply to plants like a whitewash. These materials create a protective barrier that inhibits pest feeding and activity.

Surround is approved for organic farming and should be applied once per week for 3-4 weeks after transplanting or seedling emergence, and then as needed. These materials must be re-applied after heavy rains. Research has shown that Surround is effective for **controlling flea beetle on eggplant** (<http://mdvegetables.umd.edu/Entomology/Flea%20Beetle%20Control.cfm>)

You may be thinking, "Ok - I like the idea of using these non-chemical approaches. But will they work on some of our area's toughest insect pests?" Here are six very common insect pests and the physical controls that will work best:

- Cucumber beetle- floating row cover
- Flea beetle- floating row cover or particle barrier
- Imported cabbageworm- floating row cover
- Squash bug- hand-pick or floating row cover
- Mexican bean beetle- hand-pick or floating row cover
- Colorado potato beetle- hand-pick or floating row cover

Cucumber beetle

Cucumber beetles are a major problem for vegetable gardeners because they feed on the foliage and fruit of cucumber, squash and muskmelon plants and spread a fatal disease - bacterial wilt.

Adult beetles overwinter in plant debris in the garden and in surrounding wooded areas. They emerge in early spring and begin feeding on pollen, flowers and leaves of a wide range of host plants. They jump on vegetable transplants and seedlings as soon as they are available. The female beetle lays orange eggs in the soil at the base of host plants. The larva is white, slender and ¼ of

an inch long and feeds on the roots of host plants. There are 1-2 generations per year. You must control cucumber beetles early in the season on transplants and seedlings. This pest is fast moving and difficult to handpick- they drop when disturbed. They are most often found on leaf undersides, in flowers or at the base of plant stems. And you'll never see the eggs or larvae. To prevent infestations, cover cucumber, squash, and melon plants with a floating row cover as soon as they are planted. Remove the cover during flowering to allow for insect cross-pollination of flowers. Otherwise, you won't get any fruits!



Spotted cucumber beetle



Striped cucumber beetle

Flea beetle

Several species of flea beetles are common pests on a wide variety of vegetable crops, especially eggplant, corn, and the cabbage family (radish, kale, broccoli, etc.) Adults overwinter in garden weeds and trash. They are one of the earlier garden pests, emerging in late April or early May. The adult female beetles lay tiny white eggs in the soil. The small larvae that hatch out look very similar to other beetle grubs. You will probably never see either one!

Adult flea beetles are about 1/10 of an inch in size, shiny and black. They are very active and hop away like fleas when disturbed, making them impossible to hand-pick. They chew tiny holes in leaves, producing a shotgun pattern. There are 1-2 generations per year.

Flea beetles can ravage and stunt young plants, resulting in low



Eggplant flea beetles

yields. Healthy, fast-growing transplants are more likely to outgrow light flea beetle feeding. Use floating row covers if you have had problems with flea beetles on eggplant (remove cover when plants flower) or try the wood ash or Surround spray particle barrier.



Surround mixed with water and sprayed on eggplant to control flea beetle

Imported cabbageworm

This is a common pest of cabbage family members. The adult is a white butterfly with several black spots that emerges in early spring and lays tiny yellow eggs on the undersides of leaves (seen only by astute gardeners!) The larvae (caterpillars) hatch out in 7-10 days. They are velvety-green



Imported cabbage worm eggs

with a yellow or orange stripe down their backs and eventually reach a length of 1 ¼ inches. They are easy to hand-pick but difficult to see.

Caterpillars chew holes in the leaves and sometimes bore into cabbage heads. The holes start out very small but become progressively larger. The larvae feed for two weeks leaving dark green pellets of excrement where they feed. There are 2-3 generations each year.



Imported cabbage worm larva

Cover plants with a floating row cover right after transplanting and leave the cover on until harvest.

Squash bug

This pest loves squash and pumpkin but will feed on other members of this family. The adults are 5/8 inch long and brown in color, and emit an unpleasant odor when crushed. They spend the winter in plant debris. Adults mate in spring and females lay masses of eggs, usually on leaf undersides, that are a dark gold color.



Squash bug eggs and nymphs



Squash bug - adult

They prefer to rest under thick organic mulches near host plants. There is one generation each year.

This pest can really build up in a garden. Cover seedlings and transplants immediately with a floating row cover to prevent egg laying. Or make it your mission to squash every adult, nymph, and egg mass that you see. The attractive eggs are rubbery and difficult to scrape off. Try tearing out the portion of the leaf with the eggs and then destroying them underfoot or by dropping the eggs in a container of soapy water. Some gardeners don't like to hand-pick this pest because leaves are spiny.

Mexican bean beetle

Mexican bean beetles larvae and adults "skeletonize" bean leaves from underneath, removing tissue from between leaf veins. Adults overwinter by hibernating in the garden or nearby fields or woods.

The adult beetle is copper-brown with 16 black spots on the wing covers. It is round, 1/3 of an inch long and resembles a ladybird beetle.

The adult female lays yellow eggs in clusters on the undersides of bean leaves. The larvae that hatch out are yellowish-orange, covered with soft spines and about 1/3 of an inch long. There are 1-3 generations per year in Maryland.



Mexican bean beetle larva



Mexican bean beetle adult

Adults, larvae, and egg masses are easy to spot and hand-pick. Floating row covers can be applied over newly planted seeds and left on until harvest.

Colorado potato beetle

Can be a serious pest of eggplant and potato and sometimes tomato and pepper. Adults overwinter below the soil surface near host plants and emerge in late April or early May in Central Maryland.

The adult beetles and grubs chew holes in foliage and fruit and can defoliate entire plants. Adults are yellow with black stripes on the wings and dark dots just behind the head. They are hard-shelled, very convex and 1/3 of an inch long. The female beetle lays orange eggs in rows, usually on the underside of leaves. The young larvae are red with black legs and a black head. Larvae gradually become plump and change



Adult potato beetle laying eggs



Potato beetle larvae

in color to pink, orange, or light tan with two rows of black spots on either side. There are 1-3 generations per year in Maryland.

Monitor plants closely throughout the season if you are going to handpick and remove eggs, larvae and adults. This is a slow moving insect and the larvae feed in groups. A floating row cover can be laid over seed pieces at planting time to exclude beetles.

Brown Marmorated Stink Bug

Have you seen the brown marmorated stink bug feeding on fruits and vegetables in your home garden? If so, we'd like to know what crops are involved and the extent of the damage. Report your findings by calling our horticulture consultants at 800-342-2507.



Brown marmorated stink bug

A Quick Guide to Pruning Hydrangeas

by Ray Bosmans, Professor Emeritus, University of MD

Hydrangeas are very beautiful additions to any landscape. They all have attractive foliage and bear large attractive blossoms. Hydrangeas are also hardy, insect and disease resistant, and versatile in many landscape settings. They grow well in a variety of soils and tolerate wetness better than most other landscape woody plants. Hydrangeas have a lot going for them, but many gardeners don't know how and when to prune them.

Hydrangeas that flower on old wood (last year's growth) are the earliest to flower. Those that flower later in the season are flowering from blossom buds grown on new wood (current year's growth). If you feel uncertain about all this, a very safe rule to follow for all types of hydrangeas is that no pruning is better than doing the wrong type of pruning.

A simplified approach suitable for all types of hydrangeas is to limit pruning to:

- Winter-killed wood- in the spring before or as the buds are opening remove all the dead stems. Test the stem for life by scraping the

bark with a knife, if it's not green underneath, it's dead and should be removed.

- Rejuvenation- even healthy hydrangeas have numerous dead stems eventually. In the early spring remove dead or very old stems at the base of the plant. This will stimulate new growth and a more vigorous bloom set later in the summer.
- Dead flowers- The safest pruning that can't be done incorrectly is the removal of old dried flowers (dead-heading).

Bigleaf Hydrangea, *H. macrophylla*



This is the most commonly grown hydrangea in Maryland landscapes. They have attractive

lustrous leaves and large blue, pink or red flowers. Flower color is dependent on soil pH. Often these hydrangeas become over-grown and need to be trimmed back. However, too much pruning will

greatly reduce or eliminate flowering. Its best to wait until new growth emerges to be sure that you are only removing dead or weakened parts and not removing live stems with flower buds.

Smooth Hydrangea, *H. arborescens*



Native to the North American woodlands, it is fairly common in home landscapes. This species is very unique

for a hydrangea in that it will bloom on new wood of the current season. This makes this one the easiest to prune. Simply cut it back hard in early spring. Flowering is actually enhanced by cutting back all stems to about 12 inches from the soil line.

PG Hydrangea, *H. paniculata*

This hydrangea, originally from the Orient, is one of the largest types grown. It is capable of reaching 25 feet in height. This hydrangea has brittle stems that may break under the load of blossoms in windy weather. Removal of broken stems is needed more on this species than with most others.

Like the Smooth hydrangea, this one also flowers on the current season's wood. Pruning back in the spring will actually enhance flowering as well

as help to manage its size. If size is of no concern, simply remove spent flowers and any broken stems.

Oakleaf Hydrangea, *H. quercifolia*



A beautiful hydrangea native to the southeast U.S. the oakleaf hydrangea is a favorite of many gardeners.

Even without its massive upright 12 inch tall blossoms, the foliage by itself is spectacular. Its flowers are produced on old wood (last year's growth) therefore to preserve as much blossoming as possible, plants should not be pruned until after they bloom (July). The reason to prune is to maintain a desired size. Winter-killed or other dead wood can be removed any time.

Climbing hydrangea, *H. anomala subsp. petiolaris*

This trailing-vine species is attractive and easy to care for. Climbing hydrangeas are the most vigorously growing types. The only pruning needed is to remove unwanted stray stems to control its growth. This may need to be repeated a few times in the season as the vine quickly produces new stems.

(Photos courtesy of [Univeristy of Connecticut, Plant database](#))



What's new?

As we enter the growing season take a few minutes to explore the [Grow It Eat It](#) website to see:

- Thirty new **vegetable profiles**. Some even have recipes!
- **Grow It Give It** - Sharing your harvest. Don't know what to do with all the extra produce? Consider donating it to a local soup kitchen or food pantry. See suggestions on our website.
- **Growing Great Gardens** - topics for May and June are companion planting and irrigation. Share your gardening secrets with our network! Details are on our website. Send your tips to groweat@gmail.com.
- Have you **joined the network**? As of 5/3, we have 5,284 gardeners in 1,966 gardens!
- What works – what doesn't? Find out what really happens over the garden fence! Be a Follower of the **GrowEat Blog** for a glimpse into the real life experiences of Master Gardeners across the Maryland.

“Expert Plant Picks” – Tough shrubs for mid-Atlantic urban conditions.

Mary Kay Malinoski and David L. Clement

Bottlebrush Buckeye, *Aesculus parviflora*

Deer resistant, low maintenance shrub with large white summer flowers. This slow growing plant may eventually get to 8-12 feet tall by 8-15 feet wide. It forms a wide spreading suckering multi-stemmed shrub. The foliage is deciduous, 3-8 inches long, palmately compound (5-7 leaflets), opposite, medium to dark green leaves in summer with good yellow fall color. Long spikes of white flowers appear June – July with long stamens and pistils imparting a bottlebrush appearance. It prefers full sun to partial shade and moist soil. This is an outstanding large shrub with few rivals in the urban landscape.



Dwarf Fothergilla, *Fothergilla gardenii*

Tough plant with fragrant white spring flowers and attractive foliage. It is slow growing and will reach 2-3 feet tall by 2-3 feet wide. This small rounded shrub has deciduous leaves, 1-2.5 inches long, simple, alternate, dark green leaves in summer with brilliant yellow to orange to scarlet fall color. Large fragrant bottlebrush shaped white flowers appear April to early May. Prefers full sun to partial shade and moist soil.



Recommended Cultivars:

F. gardenii ‘Blue Mist’, best blue summer foliage with late holding leaves in fall; *F. major* ‘Blue Shadow’ larger (to 3-4 feet with an equal spread) and more vigorous than ‘Blue Mist’.

Oakleaf Hydrangea, *Hydrangea quercifolia*

Widely adaptable shrub for the urban landscape, fragrant white early summer flowers. This slow to medium growing upright shrub reaches 4-6 feet tall by 4-6 feet wide. It has deciduous, 3-8 inches long, simple, opposite, dark green leaves in summer with excellent red to orange brown to purple fall color. Large elongated lacy panicles of fragrant white flowers appear in late May to early July, and gradually turn pink and red before drying and turning brown in fall. It prefers full sun to partial shade and cool moist soil.



Recommended Cultivars: *H. quercifolia* ‘Snow Queen’, improved selection with excellent fall color; *H. quercifolia* ‘Pee Wee’, dwarf form reaching 2-3 feet in height with an equal spread; *H. quercifolia* ‘Little Honey’ a chartreuse foliage sport of ‘Pee Wee’; *H. quercifolia* ‘Munchkin’ compact, flowers fade to medium pink; *H. quercifolia* ‘Ruby Slippers’ compact, flowers fade to deep rose.

Virginia Sweetspire, *Itea virginica*

Tough adaptable native shrub, attractive upright, white flower spikes in summer. This upright to rounded shrub has a medium growth rate and will reach 3-5 feet tall by 6 feet wide. Deciduous, 1.5-4 inches long, simple, alternate, medium to dark green leaves in summer with excellent reddish purple fall color that lasts through early December. Long panicles of delicate lightly fragrant white flowers appear June to July. Prefers full sun to partial shade and cool moist soil.



Recommended Cultivars:

I. virginica 'Henry's Garnet', better flower and fall color; *I. virginica* 'Sprich' LITTLE HENRY® compact form of 'Henry's Garnet'

Winterberry Holly, *Ilex verticillata*

Widely adaptable shrub for wet locations with excellent winter berry color. This upright shrub has a slow to medium growth rate and will reach 3-10 feet tall by 3-10 feet wide. Leaves are deciduous, 1.5-3 inches long, simple, alternate, dark green, and yellow in fall. Small white summer flowers are followed by abundant berries that turn red as the foliage is shed in fall. The berries are retained until early spring. Best berry production requires both male and female plants in the same location. Prefers full sun to partial shade and moist soil.



Recommended Cultivars and Hybrids:

I. verticillata 'Winter Red', good red berry production; *I. verticillata* × *I. serrata* 'Sparkleberry', very persistent red winter berries; *I. verticillata* × *I. serrata* 'Apollo', male cultivar for berry production on 'Sparkleberry'.

Photo credits:

- Bottlebrush buckeye: John Ruter, University of Georgia, Bugwood.org
- Dwarf Fothergilla: Rick Johnson, Penn State
- Oakleaf Hydrangea: Joseph LaForest, University of Georgia, Bugwood.org
- Virginia Sweetspire: Chris Evans, River to River CWMA, Bugwood.org
- Winterberry Holly: Richard Webb, Self-employed horticulturist, Bugwood.org



HGIC has jumped on the social media bandwagon. If you enjoy receiving the HGIC e-newsletter, stay in touch more often by “liking” us on Facebook and following us on Twitter.

Is all this social media technology new to you? Facebook is an online gathering spot where you can connect with friends and people who have similar interests. Go to [HGIC's facebook page](#) for a preview. Like what you see? Click the Sign Up button to get started. In the ever changing world of Facebook, you now “like” the Home and Garden Information Center (instead of becoming a “fan”). Once you join the HGIC page, you can read posted comments, post questions, and comment on posts by others.

Twitter is another way we are communicating with Marylanders. Tweets are very short messages (140 characters or less) and often include hyperlinks to other web sites or publications. To learn more visit [our twitter page](#) and click the Join today button.

Questions and Answers

by Debra Ricigliano, Certified Professional Horticulturist

Question:

I am trying to be responsible and not use any chemicals on my lawn. My home is only two years old and the lawn was planted by the builder. Right now the grass is very thin and clover is beginning to take over. Last fall I overseeded with tall fescue and I fertilized with an organic fertilizer. What is the environmentally friendly way to improve my lawn?

Answer:

Recent trends have shown that homeowners are trying to use fewer chemicals around their homes. Yours is a difficult situation because it is a common practice for most topsoil to be removed during construction of new homes and growing turf organically begins with fertile soil. Builders often plant new lawns on a thin layer of topsoil that covers infertile subsoil. To compound the problem, the soil also may contain building debris, stones and rubble and be compacted from construction equipment. This prevents good root development allowing weeds like clover to take over. The first step is to have the soil tested then lime and fertilize according to the soil test results. Keep grass mowed to a height of 2 ½ - 3 ½ inches and let the grassclippings lay on the turf. To improve the soil, core aerate in late summer or early fall, topdress with compost, and then overseed with turf type tall fescue. Controlling lawn weeds organically is difficult, but thickening up the turf and proper turf care practices will help to combat them. Also keep in mind that organic lawn care means accepting a certain percentage of weeds in your lawn. For additional information refer to the following publications found on our website [FS 702](#) Lawns and the Chesapeake Bay, and [HG 102](#) Lawn, Establishment, Renovating and Overseeding.



Question:

Last night we found a rat snake in our family room which is in the basement. I was able to capture it and throw it back outside. How do I both get rid of any additional snakes and prevent additional ones from coming inside? We do have a large patch of ivy on one side of our home. Please help because my wife is very afraid of snakes.

Answer:

First of all we commend you for not harming the snake and putting it back outside. Snakes are very beneficial creatures and are part of a healthy ecosystem. They feed on rodents and other insect pests. Finding them indoors can be very unsettling. Snakes occasionally enter homes to look for a warm place during cold weather and a cool place during the heat of the summer. Control begins outdoors, so check around the foundation for hiding places. You may consider either removing or thinning out the ivy near your home. Eliminate wood and firewood piles, stacked rock walls or piles, and tall weeds. Seal all openings and gaps with caulk or foam insulation. A common spot for snakes to enter basements is the small gap between the top of foundation walls and siding. There are snake repellents on the market but, their effectiveness is questionable. For additional information please refer to our [snake publication](#). Also view our [snake videos](#).



MONTHLY TIPS FROM HGIC

Every month we publish timely tips on our website. This year we will be highlighting some “best of” tips. If we pique your interest, please visit our website to read more (www.hgic.umd.edu) or call us with your questions - 800-342-2507. Be sure to click on the [blue links](#) to view related publications or photos.

MAY

Lawns

- Repair small bare spots now.
- If you didn't fertilize in the fall, apply no more than one half pound of nitrogen per 1000 square feet in the spring.
- Cut cool season grasses at a height of 2 ½-3 ½ inches. New residential recommendations are to mow zoysia grass and Bermuda grass to a height of 2 -3 inches.

Woody Ornamental Plants

- Spring flowering shrubs can be pruned after they bloom. Interior branches of boxwood can be pruned to promote air circulation.
- Interior leaves of holly and magnolia yellow and drop at this time of year, as do some pine needles.
- Rose bushes should be pruned back to live, green wood and fertilized. Rose slugs ([photo](#)) can be hand-picked or controlled with an application of pyrethrum and soap.
- Remove old bagworm bags ([photo](#)) from evergreen trees.
- Hemlock woolly adelgids ([photo](#)) can be sprayed with ultra-fine horticultural oil. Be sure to spray underside of needles.
- Powdery mildew can be observed on crabapple and dogwood. If you have significant damage, consider applying a labeled fungicide, like horticultural oil.
- Dogwood anthracnose ([HG 12](#)), can be seen now ([photo](#)).

Ornamental Plants

- Warm season annuals and bulbs can be planted now in central Maryland.
- Soluble starter fertilizers can be applied to the foliage or root-zone of spring flowers to get them off to a fast start.
- Leave the foliage of spring flowering bulbs alone until the top growth dies back. The green foliage is producing sugars to maintain good bulb health.
- Streaking in iris foliage ([photo](#)) can be caused by young iris borer. Dig up the rhizomes after bloom, cut off rotted and infested portions and re-plant.
- Tear-a-thumb has triangular shaped leaves have stems with recurved spines and can be controlled by hand-pulling or an application of a glyphosate herbicide.
- Slugs can be a problem. Read [HG 92](#) for more information.

Aquatic Gardens:

- Divide and repot hardy water lilies and other crowded aquatic plants. Fertilize your aquatic plants. Wait until June to plant tropical water lilies.

Fruits

- Pull the blooms off of newly planted strawberry plants. Mulch. Place small plastic jugs in your strawberry rows filled with water, molasses and yeast to attract and trap sap beetles that feed on over ripe fruit.
- Peach leaves infected with leaf curl disease will thicken, pucker and turn red, pink or purple. Rake up and dispose of fallen leaves. Spray your peach trees with liquid lime sulfur next spring.
- Spray fungicides during bloom on grapes that were damaged by black rot last year.



Vegetable Gardening

- Pinch the blooms off flower and vegetable transplants before you set them out. Gently breakup the roots of root-bound transplants.
- Mix in a handful of lime with the planting soil of each pepper and tomato transplant to prevent blossom-end rot. Set up your tomato support system after transplanting.
- Be sure not to plant tender annual plants like basil and eggplant until after the last frost date. Parsley is slow to germinate and basil should not be directly sown in the garden until the soil has thoroughly warmed.
- Salad greens should be grown in rich soil and regularly watered and fertilized for optimum succulence and eating quality.
- Cutworms (**photo**) are nocturnal caterpillars that feed on leaves and stems and can cut large plants off at ground level. They can be excluded with cardboard, plastic, or aluminum collars inserted into the soil around individual plants at planting time or apply a rough or gritty material, like ground up oyster shell or sharp sand, around vulnerable plants.
- Seedcorn maggot (**photo**) feeds on corn and bean seed and young vegetable plants. To avoid seed corn maggot and bird damage, try pre-sprouting bean and corn seed.
- Floating row covers (**GE 004**) are made from a spun-bonded polypropylene material and are available from mail-order seed and garden supply companies. They are effective at excluding insect pests and promoting strong early growth. It can be used on squash and cucumbers until the flowers form and also on cabbage family plants.

Herbs

- Four-lined plant bugs (**photo**) are now feeding on a wide range of woody and herbaceous plants. The adults are yellowish-green with 4 black stripes. The nymphs are bright red. The bugs leave rows of small, round dark spots on leaves. Unless severely injured early in the season, plants will outgrow moderate feeding damage.

Seasonal and Indoor Plants

- Most houseplants can be moved outdoors for the summer. Move them to a shady location to help acclimate them to outdoor conditions. After a few weeks outdoors those that can tolerate full sun such as palms and banana plants may be moved to the sun.
- Fungus gnats are small, black insects that hover around plants. They breed in and feed on moist media and can be controlled by allowing the growing media to dry out between waterings.

Mulch

- This is a good time to lay down organic mulches to moderate soil temperature and suppress weed growth.
- Various slime molds, like “dog-vomit” fungi and stinkhorn fungi, may be observed now growing in mulch. Although not harmful to plants, they are unsightly and can be broken up, turned under, or removed.
- Mulches should be applied only 2-3 inches deep around ornamental plants and kept away from shrub and tree trunks.

Fertilizer

- Over-fertilization, especially with fertilizers high in nitrogen, can lead to overly succulent, weak growth and encourage sucking insect pests.

Indoor and Outdoor Pests

- Mining bees are beneficial solitary bees that nest in underground burrows, fly low over the ground and make ¼ inch holes in loose soil. They are not aggressive and the males have no stinger.
- Carpenter bees (**photo**) make clean, round holes about ½ inch in diameter. They usually will not bother wood that is freshly painted or stained.

Wildlife

- Check with your county health department before live trapping wildlife pests like squirrels, groundhogs, skunks and raccoons.
- Moles can be controlled by collapsing tunnels or installing harpoon traps in new runways.
- Voles can be controlled with snap traps baited with apples.

JUNE

Lawns

- Grasscycling (leaving grass clippings on your lawn) provides about 25% of the nitrogen your lawn needs for the year.
- June is a good time to fertilize zoysiagrass; apply 1 lb. of nitrogen per 1,000 sq. ft.
- Dollar spot, brown patch and red thread may be observed on turf at this time. No fungicide sprays are recommended.

Woody Ornamentals

- Remove the spent blossoms of lilac and rhododendrons, but leave viburnum blossoms alone because they will produce berries for wildlife.
- Healthy container and burlapped and balled trees can be safely planted throughout the summer as long as they are watered during dry periods.

Herbaceous Ornamental Plants

- Pinch out the flower buds of asters, mums, goldenrod and other fall bloomers to keep plants bushy and prevent early flowering.
- Aphids are small, soft-bodied insects that may cause leaves to pucker, twist and curl downwards. Predatory insects (e.g. lady bird beetles) usually keep them under control.
- Brown, bulls-eye lesions on pachysandra are an indication of the fungal disease volutella ([photo](#)). Thin out plants to improve circulation and this disease usually subsides.

Aquatic Gardens:

- The addition of the tropical plants, water lettuce and water hyacinth will help keep your pond water clean and reduce both planktonic and filamentous algae.

Fruit

- June drop of excessive fruits is a natural thinning phenomenon and is more pronounced where no hand thinning has occurred. Hand thin, or physically remove, the fruits on plum, peach, apple and pear trees, leaving a 5-6 inch space between remaining fruits.

- Mature fruit trees that produce no fruit may be growing in excessive shade or require a pollinizer plant. This is the case with most apples, pears, sweet cherries, and some plums.
- Wilting and dieback of bramble canes accompanied by swellings along the canes indicates cane borers. Prune out below the visible damage.

Vegetable and Herb Gardening

- Now is a good time to plant a second crop of radishes, beets, and beans to make full use of available garden space.
- Choanephora ([photo](#)) wet rot can infect squash bloom and young fruits. Pick and discard affected blossoms and fruit. No sprays are recommended.
- Cut back herbs through the summer to keep plants bushy and productive. Essential oils are most concentrated right before bloom. Cut and air-dry lavender flower stalks before the florets fully open.

Compost, Fertilizer and Mulch

- If your pile is overly wet and smelly, tear it apart and mix in some dry materials high in carbon, like shredded newspaper, straw or shredded leaves.
- Avoid the temptation to fertilize ornamental garden plants that appear to be healthy and productive. Over-fertilization leads to increased insect and disease.
- Avoid buying or using mulches that have been stored in large, high piles and smell of alcohol or methanol.

Seasonal and Indoor Plants

- This is the time to fertilize actively growing houseplants.
- Monitor houseplants that are outside for insect problems. Hose them down regularly if you notice spider mite feeding.
- Badly diseased or infested plants should simply be cut back and the damaged portions thrown out.



Indoor and Outdoor Pests

- Avoid mosquito and midge problems by turning over any pots, lids or saucers that might collect water and create a breeding site.
- Ticks are active year-round. Wear light colored clothing, apply repellent, and get in the habit of checking yourself, your children and pets closely for ticks after spending time outdoors.
- See our publication **HG 7** for ant control suggestions.

Wildlife

- This is snake mating season, their most active time of year. Snakes are beneficial creatures and should not be harmed. See our snake publication (**HG 64**) and **videos**.
- Dissuade persistent woodpeckers by tacking up some hardware cloth over the area where they are pecking.

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