



# HOME & GARDEN

Home and Garden information center • 12005 Homewood Road • Ellicott City, MD 21042 • 1-800-342-2507

June 2009

## Vegetable and Herb Gardening Tips

### Culture

- Every year we hear reports and receive samples of tomato plants damaged by herbicides, especially 2,4-D, that have drifted into gardens. Tomatoes are very susceptible to herbicide injury. The leaves will become strappy, twisted and distorted. The plants often grow out of the damage and will produce a crop.
- The suckers or succulent shoots that develop from tomato plants at the soil line should be removed throughout the season. You can plant these suckers for a late crop.
- Now is a good time to plant a second crop of radishes, beets, and beans to make full use of available garden space.
- Perpetual spinach, Malabar spinach, and Swiss chard are good heat tolerant salad greens for Maryland. 'Grand Rapids', 'Red Sails', 'Deer Tongue' and oak-leaf type lettuces are some of the more heat tolerant looseleaf lettuce varieties that can be sown now. 'Jericho' is a heat-tolerant romaine cultivar. Keep them fertilized and watered and covered with a shade cloth or floating row cover if possible.
- Control weeds by laying down sections of newspaper covered with straw or last fall's mulched leaves.
- Be sure to get stakes for tomatoes, cucumbers and pole beans in the ground right after transplanting or emergence. Doing this later in the season when they have grown large is difficult to do and may lead to some root and plant damage.

### Insects

- Many species of insects become troublesome to vegetables this month. Aphids continue to feed on a wide variety of vegetable plants. It is not necessary to spray chemical insecticides or release beneficials to control aphids. If necessary, an application of insecticidal soap or ultra fine horticultural oil will kill aphids, spider mites, whitefly and thrips.
- Handpick Colorado potato beetles and their orange egg masses on eggplant and potato plants. A floating row cover also works well to exclude Colorado potato beetles and straw mulch can also help control this pest.
- Cucumber beetles can be either yellow with 11 black dots or yellow with 3 black stripes. They have a wide host range and begin to feed on all plant parts of all members of the cucumber family as soon as plants emerge. These pests transmit bacterial wilt disease, which causes mature cucumber and muskmelon plants to wilt and die. Controlling this pest early in the season is very important. Row covers can be used to cover plants to deter cucumber beetles or you can apply a labeled insecticide. Remove row covers when cucurbit family plants begin to bloom.
- Cutworms, 1-inch long caterpillars, cut down seedlings and transplants at ground level and drag the plants into underground burrows. They can also strip foliage leaving bare stems. Try placing a cardboard collar around vulnerable plants that extends 2 inches down into the soil.
- Flea beetles are a serious pest of eggplant and also affect potato, tomato and members of the cabbage family. The small black insects jump when disturbed and produce small shot holes in leaves. If uncontrolled they can greatly limit production. Light infestations can be controlled with a dusting of bread flour or wood ash. Floating row covers are also effective but should be removed when plants flower to allow for cross-pollination by bumblebees. Spraying plants with "Surround" creates a white particle film that can minimize flea beetle feeding. You can also control flea beetles with neem, a botanical insecticide.

Educating People To Help Themselves

Local Governments - U.S. Department of Agriculture Cooperating

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- Imported cabbageworm is appearing on mustard family members like broccoli and cabbage. They are small, cream colored caterpillars that become velvety green when fully grown. They chew large irregular holes in leaves and leave black droppings. Handpick them or spray with a B.t. product when larvae are small.
- Handpick harlequin bugs and their white and black, barrel-shaped eggs on brassica family members. Also, look for and destroy the copper colored eggs of squash bugs on the undersides of squash and pumpkin leaves.
- The adults, larvae and eggs of Mexican bean beetle can be handpicked. The adults are coppery with 16 black dots and resemble ladybird beetles. Carefully inspect the upper and lower leaves of your plants for these pests and their egg masses.
- Slugs may cause round holes in the leaves of many different plants. Slugs reproduce around garden structures, like rock wall and railroad ties and in shaded, moist areas covered with thick groundcovers. You can control them with shallow containers of beer or a molasses, water and yeast mixture. The slugs crawl into the containers and drown. You can also set out boards and grapefruit rinds which will attract the slugs. Turn the boards and rinds over in the morning and destroy the slugs. Diatomaceous earth, sharp sand or ground crab and oyster shell can be applied around plants as physical barriers. There is a product containing iron phosphate that slowly poisons slugs upon ingestion. Be sure to carefully read the label and follow instructions.
- Squash vine borer adults are laying eggs on squash and pumpkin stems. Monitor plants for signs of wilting and entrance holes on lower stems. You may see sawdust-like frass around the hole. Stems may contain more than one larva. They can feed inside the stems for up to 2 weeks. Here's the easiest and surest method of control: cut a slit above the hole with a razor, remove the 1 inch long white larva with a brown head, and mound up soil around the wound.
- Four-lined plant bugs are finishing up now. They feed on a wide range of herbs, especially those in the mint family. 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.

#### **Disease**

- Choanephora wet rot infects squash bloom and young fruits. The fruits shrivel and may develop a fuzzy gray growth. Prevent the problem by removing blooms attached to enlarging fruits. No sprays are recommended.

#### **Herbs**

- 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.

**Have a pest or gardening question? Call the Home and Garden Information Center**

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