

Pest Patrol

Squash Bugs and Cucumber Beetles

Now that cucumbers, zucchinis, squashes, melons and pumpkins are flowering, we will see large numbers of two pests. Unless you are very lucky, they will almost certainly reduce your total crop and possibly shorten your productive season for this family.



Squash bugs *Anastis tristis* are large grey stinkbugs that suck the juices of plants in the squash family (Cucurbits). They do damage to fruits, cause wilting of leaves, and can transmit viruses that cause yellowing and death of plants. They lay their eggs (right) on cucurbit leaves, and later in the summer their nymphs may cover an entire leaf and drain it of sap.



Cucumber beetles are colourful yellow beetles that can damage the leaves of a wide variety of crops, but really love the pollen and larvae feed exclusively on cause premature wilting and cucumber beetles *Acalymma* spotted cucumber beetles warmer environments. If are producing well and then the likely culprit (although cucumber stem beetles, riddle the bottom on the stem



flowers of cucurbits. Their the roots of cucurbits, and can death. We gwt mainly striped *vittatum*, though a few will migrate in from your zucchinis and cucumbers suddenly wilt and die, this is you can also check for whose large white grubs will leaving it like an open net.)

Control of these pests in a community garden is difficult. Hand removal is very tedious but may be the only choice. Squash bugs must be squished, which is unpleasant. The females will give off a strong but harmless acetone (nail polish remover) smell. Cucumber beetles can be vacuumed with a small battery-powered vacuum, and disposed in tightly tied plastic bags. Row covers will keep the adult insects off your crop for a while, but cucurbits require insect pollinators, so either the row covers must be removed or the female flowers must all be hand pollinated. Bait traps have been tried, but they often require toxic insecticides (contained in the trap) and most gardeners agree that they are not very effective. On a large field, bait crops of yellow zucchini or summer squash can be planted early to attract the insects. Crop plants can then be sown late, and the bait plants bagged and removed one at a time just before the crop plants flower. This is not practical with 80 different gardeners, so we have to live with the enemy

If either of these pests kills your plants, pull them by the roots, chop them up, and put the dead plants in the large composter by the gate to remove larvae from the soil. Try to remove all squash family plants completely at the end of the season to limit over wintering larvae, and avoid sowing cucurbits in the same place two years in a row. Beyond that, just hope for a hard winter to reduce the soil-dwelling population!