

# Home/Garden

## Garden Calendar

This information was provided by Karen Idoine of the Franklin County Cooperative Extension.

- Now is the time to:
- check your trees and repair wounds and broken branches.
  - hand pick tomato hornworms.
  - harvest zucchini when 6- to 8-inches long.
  - change the oil in your lawnmower.
  - cut, gather and dry herbs. Harvest mid-morning and hang to dry in a well-ventilated area, out of the sun.
  - control fleas.
  - keep up with the garden harvest; invite friends to pick excess while still tender and young.

- build a compost pile with garden wastes, weeds and lawn clippings.
- order bulbs for fall planting.
- keep weeds from going to seed.
- think about entering your home-grown produce in the Franklin County Fair, Sept. 9 to 12. Contact the Franklin County Extension for an information booklet.
- inspect lilac, euonymus, privet and pachysandra for scale insects.
- stop watering amaryllis and allow leaves to die back.
- make final sowings of peas, spinach, radishes, and lettuce for a late season harvest.



## Questions about pests and poisons

*When I was in the garden planting the fall spinach crop, I disturbed a toad. It startled me and I gave a yelp, but I'm glad to find this critter in my garden. During the night toads feast on cutworms, potato beetles, chinch bugs, ants and slugs. During one garden season, a single toad can eat up to 15,000 insects making him a very welcome guest indeed.*

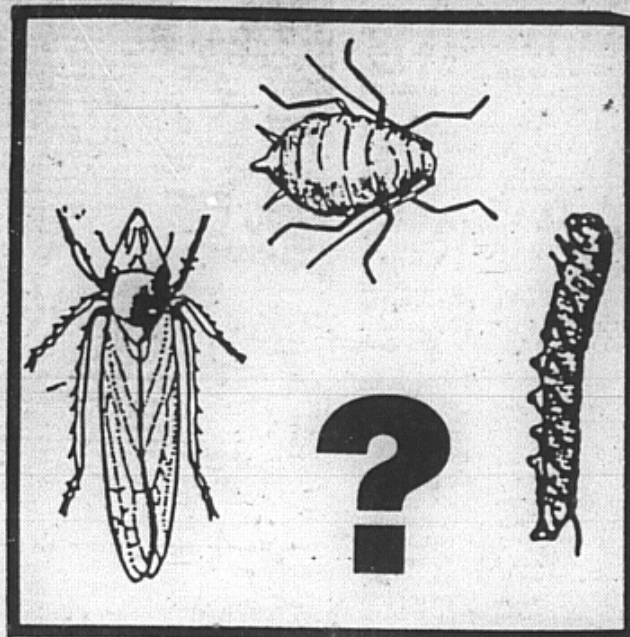
*My husband was repairing an interior wall in our house and he suddenly called out to me, "Look at this amazing thing!" I could tell from the tone of voice that it was probably something disgusting and warned him to keep his distance — which he did. He held out a dried-out snake skin.*

*While I was glad to have this evidence of snakes living in the neighborhood, I prefer to keep them outside, not in my walls. I often find a snake or two near the compost pile in the early morning or on the north side of the house near the hose and spigot.*

*The snakes in my yard move too fast for me to make a very positive identification, but they are probably garter snakes. These harmless, non-poisonous snakes feed on mice, worms, insects and caterpillars.*

Not all garden wildlife is so benevolent. Some readers have written to ask what to do about some of these creatures. One gardener said that her squash vines had wilted, but couldn't tell why, especially since she had been watering during this very dry weather. The squash vine borer, *Melittia cucurbitae*, is probably the culprit.

The adult is a moth that emerges from its cocoon in early summer and the female lays eggs on the underside of leaves of squash vines that are just sending out runners. In a few days the borers hatch and tunnel into the stems to feed. You will notice that the vines wilt suddenly and if you look closely you'll see signs of greenish "sawdust" at the base of the squash stem. The squash vine borer can also attack cucumbers, melons and pumpkins.



Pat Leuchtman

Between The Rows



with a hot pepper and soap solution, or set out jars filled with molasses and water to trap them.

However, sanitation is one of the best ways to avoid grasshoppers. Keep the lawn or field around the garden mowed and clean, and till the garden in the fall before the really cold weather sets in. Grasshoppers lay their eggs in the late summer or fall, so if you turn the soil these eggs will be exposed to the elements and the birds.

Sanitation will help cut down on the population of almost any insect pest, but when I have to, I look for the least toxic solution to solve the problem.

*Bacillus thuringiensis* (BT — sold under the names Dipel, Thuricide and Biotrol) is a pathogenic bacterium that is safe to humans, other animals and plants, but is an excellent control of many common moth and butterfly larvae pests like the cabbage butterfly and cabbage looper. BT is sold as a wettable powder and the solution should include some oil (corn oil is a good choice) to help the solution stick to the affected plants.

I certainly haven't eliminated the Japanese beetle from my yard, but there are many fewer this year and I think my investment in milky spore disease has finally paid off. Milky spore disease kills only Japanese beetles and is harmless to the soil and beneficial insects. It will not hurt humans or animals. Although it is somewhat expensive, it goes a long way and will live in the soil for many years, continuing to act on beetle grubs.

I have children and pets in my yard and garden. I want at least this part of the dangerous world to be safe and healthy, so I do not use poisons. As far as I can tell, I have no more problems or damage to my plants than those who depend on Sevin and other noxious products.

I thank you for your questions and urge you to send me more — and comments on your successes. This way I feel that I am a guest in your garden — even at long distance.

You'll have to slit the affected stem and remove the borer, but the plant won't necessarily die. Bury the slit vine in the soil and water to encourage rooting. After the harvest these vines should not be composted; take them to the dump or burn them.

Another reader found her eggplant leaves riddled with tiny holes, but she couldn't find any bugs. Her problem is flea beetles which are tiny and very quick to hop away when you go out to examine the plants.

I have found that healthy seedlings set out in rich, organic garden soil are quite resistant to flea beetles, but sanitation is also vital in preventing an infestation. Keep weeds and grasses down around the garden and clean the garden well in the fall so that they can overwinter. In the meantime, spray foliage with a garlic and pepper solution.

Another reader knew that his problem was grasshoppers, but didn't know what to do with them. You can try spraying your garden