

## How to ID and Manage Squash Bugs

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### Fast Facts

- Squash bugs are common pests of home gardens where they typically feed on squash, pumpkins, and cucumbers.
- As adults they are shield-shaped and flattened overall, they measure 5/8th of an inch in length and are mixture of grey and brown. As nymphs they start out green with black heads and become progressively more grey as they grow.
- Squash bugs overwinter as adults so fall garden sanitation is the key to control. In the summer, physical removal of eggs and nymphs works best and insecticides are rarely needed.

### Life cycle of squash bugs

Squash bugs overwinter as adults under leaf litter, rocks, and even the exteriors of homes. They re-emerge in June, mate, and lay eggs on young cucurbit plants. The eggs (Figure 1) are bronze and football shaped and are usually laid in clusters of 20.

After 10 days eggs will hatch and nymphs (Figure 2) will feed for 4-6 weeks before becoming adults (Figure 3) by the end of the growing season. As true bugs (part of order Hemiptera) squash bugs have piercing-sucking mouthparts that act as a needle. As they feed they create yellow and brown spots on leaves and large enough infestations can cause the plants to wilt.

Figure 1



### Management of squash bugs

Physical management in June is needed to control squash bugs. Go to each plant and inspect leaves for clusters of eggs and destroy them. Catching adults and nymphs can be difficult, you can trap them by placing out newspaper or small boards in the garden. They will hide under these objects and you can simply throw the papers away or dump bugs from boards into buckets of soapy water. If there is a severe infestation on young plants, treating the undersides of leaves at night with bifenthrin, carbaryl, or permethrin will help to minimize populations.

The best thing that gardeners can do though is practice proper garden sanitation. Gardens that have large amounts of leaf litter, leftover produce, or just general debris provide great hiding spots for squash bugs to overwinter. If these sites are minimized then populations should not reach damaging levels the next year.

Figure 2



Figure 3

