

Grasshoppers

By Nebraska Extension Horticulture Educator Kathleen Cue

They are cute. They are little. So what is the big deal if there are lots of grasshoppers? These seemingly innocuous little guys and gals can be quite harmful to our landscape plants and vegetable gardens. As grasshoppers grow, their appetites become larger, making the damage they do even more severe.

Floating row covers and screens can work as exclusion devices to protect plants but bear in mind that grasshoppers can chew through floating row covers and screens made of nylon (not metal screens, thank goodness). Exclusion devices will need to be removed so bees and other pollinators can pollinate vegetable plants.

The time for insecticide treatments is when grasshoppers are less than $\frac{3}{4}$ of inch long. Waiting until the grasshoppers are larger means insecticides won't be as effective.

Grasshoppers often move to our garden spaces from fence rows and pastures. They feed on a wide variety of plants, including weeds. By making an insecticide treatment in a wide band around the garden, this will kill the grasshoppers before they move on to your prized plants.

Birds will feed on grasshoppers, so if you have chickens, lucky you. In the absence of chickens, Neem oil or insecticidal soap can be used but will work best if these products are sprayed directly on the grasshoppers. Be sure that any insecticide labeled for grasshopper management also carries a label for edible crops when treating vegetable gardens.

More information may be found here: <https://byf.unl.edu/grasshopper> .

The Extension Master Gardener horticulture helpline and open clinic hours are:
Mondays, 9:00 am to 12:00 noon, Washington County Extension, 402-426-9455
Tuesdays, 1:00 to 3:00 pm, Cuming County Extension, 402-372-6006
Wednesdays and Fridays, 9:00 am to 12:00 noon, Dodge County Extension, 402-727-2775