

## Managing the Top Five Landscape and Garden Pests

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Every garden should have low numbers of some pests to serve as a food source for natural enemies. For each group below, go to <http://hortsense.cahnr.wsu.edu/Home/HortsenseHome.aspx> and select the plant category then specific plant to get management options. You will find photos and IPM and least toxic pesticide options. To learn about natural enemies, see WSU publication with color photos at <https://pubs.extension.wsu.edu/beneficial-insects-spiders-and-mites-in-your-garden-who-they-are-and-how-to-get-them-to-stay-home-garden-series>.

**Sucking Insects (Aphids, Scales, Leafhoppers and more)** are mostly soft bodied with straw-like mouth parts that they insert into plants to suck cell contents or sap. Most suckers excrete excess sap as honeydew on which black sooty mold fungus grows. The new young, or crawler stages, are the target for any pesticide use.



- Use double-stick tape or sticky cards to monitor for young suckers.
- Before spraying, look for evidence of beneficial insects.

**Slugs and Snails.** As the climate becomes hotter, the snails, that can seal off their shell to avoid desiccation, become more abundant than slugs. There are many slug species with different behaviors. Only two major snail species. Both are related to aquatic mollusks and need moist conditions.



- Slug/snail baits should be lightly scattered, not piled near that favorite plant. (Read directions).
- Instead, scatter bait lightly where slugs/snails live (under boards, grass edges, in ground covers etc.) rather than attracting them to your favorite plant.

**Root Weevils** are beetles with a short snout and hard “shell”. The sixteen species commonly found in WA. Each has different emergence seasons: spring, late summer, or early fall. They are all nocturnal, females, and need a period of maturation feeding period of 2-4 weeks before they can lay eggs.



- Monitor plants for fresh damage and so you'll know when adults are active,
- In a landscape, if only a few plants are involved, place a pizza box under the plant after dusk, give foliage a sharp rap with a stick (weevils will drop into the box). Freeze or stomp on your collection.
- Research has shown that weevils are fewer in nurseries when conventional pesticides are NOT used allowing a greater abundance of ground beetles that prey on the weevils.

**Other Beetles** also have hard front wings. There are many species: some are plant feeders and others are predators. Knowing which you have found is important. Use sticky traps to monitor pest beetles.



- Viburnum leaf beetles lay eggs in twigs of the newest growth. Shear 1-2 years growth to remove. Then watch for survivors that emerge from remaining eggs. They will skeletonize new leaves, which is your cue to act.
- European chafers feed on grass roots and are enjoyed by crows and raccoons that tear up lawns for the grubs.

**Caterpillars are the larvae of moths and butterflies.** Most feed on plants. Adult moths flying at night are eaten by bats; and moths resting on trees during the day are bird food. There are gregarious feeders living in tents or clustering or they may be solitary feeders like cutworms.



- Apply *Bacillus thuringiensis* when caterpillars are small, and actively feeding. *Bt* must be eaten to be effective.
- Apply just after a rain, or cold spell, when caterpillars will be especially hungry and *Bt* adheres to foliage. Caution: if butterfly larvae are present, *Bt* will kill them too.
- There are also caterpillar-like sawflies that belong to the bee/wasp/ant family; they are not killed by *Bt*.