

# Pro Tips: Organic Control of Vegetable Garden Pests

Susan Mulvihill



## Top Ten Tips to Keep Your Plants Healthy:

1. Choose a sunny location for your garden
2. Know your region's growing conditions
3. Take good care of your soil
4. Provide the right amount of water
5. Space your plants appropriately
6. Go organic
7. Keep up with the weeds
8. Monitor your garden regularly
9. Keep a garden journal
10. Keep your garden free of debris



## How to Identify Bugs:

- Take photo or use a magnifying glass to see details
- Use a bug ID phone app
- Do a simple web search
- Great websites: [bugguide.net](http://bugguide.net), [insectidentification.org](http://insectidentification.org)
- Join an insect ID group on Facebook
- Ask your local Master Gardeners



### Pest Profiles:

#### **Aphids** (*pictured above*)

- ❖ 1/8" long, look for the cornicles ("tailpipes") to positively ID them
- ❖ They exude waxy substance for defense
- ❖ They excrete honeydew from their sap-sucking activities
- ❖ Aphids reproduce asexually, except late in the year they mate and female lays eggs, which hatch in spring
- ❖ Females are born pregnant!
- ❖ Live birth
- ❖ Crops they bother: artichokes, asparagus, beans, beets, cabbage family (arugula, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, collards, kale, kohlrabi, radishes, rutabagas, turnips)
- ❖ Look for puckered leaves, sticky honeydew
- ❖ Controls: spray them with a jet of water; don't use a lot of nitrogen fertilizer; use floating row cover over susceptible crops (for whole season if plants don't require pollination OR keep cover on until plants start blooming)
- ❖ Organic products: Horticultural oil, insecticidal soaps\*, Neem\*, plant extracts, pyrethrins\* (\*= toxic to pollinators, so apply very early or late in the day when they're not active)

#### **Cabbage worms (imported)**

- ❖ Adult: imported cabbage white butterfly
- ❖ Larva: caterpillar (green with yellow stripe)
- ❖ We also get cabbage loopers and diamondback caterpillars (same controls)
- ❖ Crops they bother: cabbage family crops
- ❖ Look for holes in leaves, caterpillars on or near leaf midrib
- ❖ Controls: floating row cover (these crops don't need pollination), hand-pick, clean up plant debris
- ❖ Products: *Bacillus thuringiensis*, Neem\*, plant extracts, pyrethrins\*, spinosad\*

### **Carrot flies (a.k.a. Carrot root flies)**

- ❖ Adult: 1/5" long fly with shiny black body and orange head
- ❖ Larva: ¼" long cream-colored maggot, overwinter in soil
- ❖ They are attracted to the scent of carrots
- ❖ Crops they bother: Carrot family (carrots, celeriac, celery, dill, fennel, parsnips)
- ❖ Look for tunnels, grooves and roots, rust-colored excrement
- ❖ Controls: Crop rotation, plant later in season, intercrop with garlic to disguise carrot scent, floating row cover, don't overwinter crops in the ground, clean up debris, pull up Queen Anne's Lace (host plant)
- ❖ Easy DIY project: Erect a 2-foot-tall barrier around planting because flies aren't able to fly higher than the tops of the plants

### **Slugs**

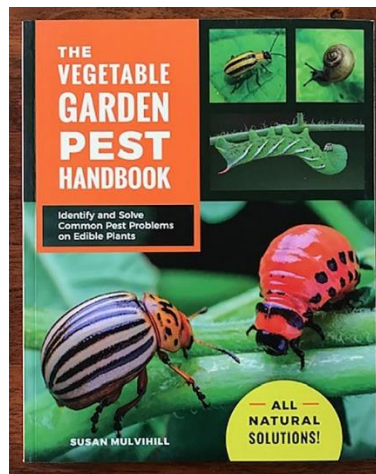
- ❖ Gastropods ("stomach-foot"); they are mollusks
- ❖ They are nocturnal
- ❖ Crops they bother: Artichokes, basil, beans, beet family crops, cabbage family crops, lettuce, peppers, tomatoes
- ❖ Look for irregularly-shaped holes, slime trails
- ❖ Controls: Eliminate moist hiding places, water in the morning, use drip irrigation if possible, hand-pick, trap under boards
- ❖ Use beer traps, copper foil barriers around base of susceptible plants
- ❖ Products: Diatomaceous earth, plant extracts, organic slug bait (non-organic bait contains metaldehyde which is toxic to pets, etc.)

### **Stink Bugs**

- ❖ Brown marmorated stink bugs & green bugs are most common here
- ❖ ½" to 5/8" long, shield-shaped bodies
- ❖ Crops they bother: Artichokes, beans, corn, tomatoes, peas, peppers, squash
- ❖ Look for holes, excrement, dimpled or distorted fruits, sunken bean/pea pods
- ❖ They try to come indoors for the winter; stink bugs don't bite or sting
- ❖ Controls: Hand-picking, stink bug traps that utilize pheromones, floating row cover (remove when plants bloom), insecticidal soap\*, pyrethrins\*
- ❖ Seal up cracks or other areas where stink bugs can get into your house

## The Vegetable Garden Pest Handbook by Susan Mulvihill

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Your complete, easy-to-use guide to the most commonly-encountered vegetable garden pests! Learn about their life cycles, what they look like (over 200 photos!), which crops they bother, what their damage looks like, and choose organic products and strategies to control them. Discover which bugs are beneficial, which pests they prey upon, and how to attract more of these good guys to your garden. Pick helpful do-it-yourself projects to make traps, barriers, and even an insect hotel to attract the good bugs!

**Get your signed copy after my talk or send me an email ([Susan@SusansintheGarden.com](mailto:Susan@SusansintheGarden.com))!**

Susan Mulvihill is the longtime garden columnist for The Spokesman-Review newspaper in Spokane, Wash. She is co-author of [Northwest Gardener's Handbook](#) and has been a Spokane County Master Gardener for 20 years. Her YouTube channel has over 400 videos on a wide range of gardening topics. Susan's goals are to get everyone to grow a vegetable garden and use organic methods.

### **Connect with Susan!**

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