

## Squash Bugs (*Anasa tristis*)



Figure 1 Adult squash bug



Figure 2 Newly emerged squash bugs

### Damage

Both adults and nymphs of the squash bug feed by sucking the sap of the plant and leaving a toxic saliva. Leaves will get yellow spots and wilt, eventually turning brown or black. Small plants may be killed entirely.

### When Are They Active

Adult squash bugs spend the winter under leaf litter and seek out squash plants in the spring or early summer. Adult females lay groups of yellowish-brown eggs on undersides of leaves throughout the summer. After a week or so, eggs will hatch greyish black nymphs. However, as summer progresses, many of the eggs are used for wasp larvae and never hatch.

### Susceptible Plants

The squash bugs attack all squash and pumpkin plants, but can also attack other cucurbits, such as cucumbers.

### Prevention Methods

The most important times to control squash bugs are when the plants are young seedlings and when they are flowering. Squash bugs are less important to control later in the growing season. Early detection of nymphs is important, as adult squash bugs are difficult to kill. Clean up plant matter around the garden in the fall to reduce the number of overwintering sites. Covering vines with row cover until blossoming begins will help, or you can delay planting squash plants until the early months of summer. Nasturtium and tansy are companion plants that repel squash bugs.

### Treatment Methods

Remove or knock off and kill nymphs and adults by dropping them into a pail of soapy water. Crush eggs that are attached to the undersides and stems of leaves. Trap squash bugs by laying out boards or pieces of newspaper. Squash bugs will congregate under the boards at night, and then can be collected and destroyed in the morning. Remove plant debris around the garden during the growing season to reduce the potential harborages where squash bugs may hide.

### Additional Information/Resources

- UW Extension Garden Fact Sheet [XHT1135 Squash Bug](#)
- University of Minnesota Extension [Squash bugs in home gardens](#)
- Dane County UW Extension Horticulture Hotline [608-224-3721](tel:608-224-3721) (M-F, 9 am-12 noon, April 15 – October 31) or [horticulture@countyofdane.com](mailto:horticulture@countyofdane.com)

*Photo Credits: Figure 1 & 2-University of Minnesota Extension Squash bugs in home gardens Publication, photos by Jeff Hahn*