

Home and Garden Guide to Mormon Crickets and Grasshoppers



What will they eat?

Mormon cricket and grasshopper eggs generally hatch in undisturbed sites such as pastures, empty lots and roadsides. As the plants in these areas dry out or are eaten, they move to more lush growth found in yards and gardens. They will eat anything they can get their mandibles (chewing parts) into. They generally eat vegetation such as grasses, flowers and vegetables, but have been known to eat tree bark and even the wood on house siding.

I've heard of grasshoppers but what's a Mormon cricket?

The Mormon cricket is not a true cricket. The insect resembles more a lifestyle of a grasshopper. Mormon crickets hatch during the spring, and depending on elevation usually around the first few weeks of April. However, in the southern part of the state, they typically hatch the first part of March. Young Mormon crickets are called nymphs.

These nymphs develop during the spring months. They undergo seven stages of development called in-stars. It takes 60 to 90 days for the Mormon cricket to pass through these seven stages and obtain the adult stage. The female Mormon cricket lays its eggs during the summer months. The incubation of the eggs occurs during the fall and winter months. The eggs start hatching when soil temperatures reach 40 degrees Fahrenheit. The Mormon cricket cannot fly, but is still an extremely mobile insect. When the crickets are young, they do not migrate long distances. After about the fourth in-star and during the adult stage the Mormon crickets become ravenous and start banding together. Once the crickets have banded together, they begin migrating. During their migrations they destroy any vegetation in their path.

How do I keep them out of my yard?

Mormon cricket and grasshopper eggs generally hatch in undisturbed sites such as pastures, empty lots and roadsides. As the plants in these areas dry out or are eaten, they migrate out of vacant fields and low hills into the green lawns and gardens. Currently, homes are being built on lands that have for centuries produced grasshoppers and Mormon crickets. Therefore, we are seeing more and more crickets and grasshoppers hatch in lawns and gardens from eggs laid the previous year. This results in thousands of dollars in damage to newly planted landscapes. It is very important that communities work together to control grasshopper outbreaks. If one person is spraying, and neighbors are not, then the grasshoppers will just continue migrating from adjacent property.

If there is an outbreak of grasshoppers on your landscape during the summer, start spraying early. Once you see that grasshoppers have invaded, even the little ones, start spraying with diazinon for use on turf and ornamentals, malathion for use on turf, ornamentals and vegetables, or liquid carbaryl (Sevin) for use on turf, vegetables, and ornamentals. See precautionary statement on page two (Note: Dursban is effective but no longer available for home owners. If you still have containers of it around the home it is safe to use them according to label directions.) Baits that use insecticide such as Sevin have not been an effective barrier against grasshoppers in Utah. Grasshoppers fly and jump great distances and more than likely will miss the barrier of bait completely. This bait, however, is very effective for Mormon crickets.

Can these insecticides be a danger to dogs, cats and other pets?

If you follow the label directions your pets should not be at risk. It should be noted that birds and fish are more sensitive to most insecticides than are other animals. If you have an outdoor fish pond, bird feeder or raise free-roaming chickens, turkeys or other domesticated birds, you should use extra caution when using any type of chemical and you should always read and follow the label directions for the product you choose to use for control.

What kind of protective clothing, eyewear, etc., do I need?

The minimum requirements are shoes, socks, long pants and a long sleeve shirt with a collar. You might also consider a hat, gloves and eyewear. Through this is the minimum you would be wise to also use coveralls and rubber boots that you can take off and leave outside when you are finished. Change your clothes after applying any pesticide and wash them separate from other clothing. Also, be sure to properly wash your hands and face before eating or drinking to prevent accidental contact with your skin. Otherwise you may inadvertently bring pesticides into your home where they could come in contact with small children and/or pets.



Is there anything I can do this year to reduce the chance of them coming back next year?

Vacant lots and fields need to be tilled in late fall to expose the eggs. Eggs are destroyed when they are exposed to the cold environment. Lawns need to be raked to also expose the eggs. Flower gardens may have a population of eggs, so the soil should be turned over to expose the eggs.

Precautionary Statement

All pesticides have both benefits and risks. Benefits can be maximized and risks minimized by reading and following the labeling. Pay close attention to the directions for use and the precautionary statements. The information on pesticide labels contains both instructions and limitations. Pesticide labels are legal documents and it is a violation of both federal and state laws to use a pesticide inconsistent with its labeling. The pesticide applicator is legally responsible for proper use. Always read and follow the label.

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