

How Do You Get Rid of Squash Bugs?

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Quick Answer

The best time to get rid of squash bugs is to catch them early. Check your plants often, and kill eggs, nymphs, and adults as soon as you see them. If you wait too long, they can overrun your plant, and it may never recover. Follow these tips:

- **Destroy eggs.** Smash them with your thumb, or use duct tape to pull them off leaves.
- **Smash young bugs.** They're easy to kill right after they hatch.
- **Remove adults.** Smash them, pull them off, or drop them in soapy water. Some people use a small car vacuum so they don't have to touch them.
- **Check under every leaf.** With two plants, it's easy to do once a week. With 20 or 30 plants, it's much harder.
- **Use insecticides early.** Pick one labeled for squash bugs, and apply it when you first see bugs. It works best on young bugs and won't do as much on adults.
- **Mix methods if you have a lot of plants.** Preventive sprays are available, but spraying once bugs show up may work better. You can also combine sprays with picking bugs off by hand.
- **Look for plant varieties that resist squash bugs.**

What Plants Do Squash Bugs Attack?

Squash bugs mostly attack pumpkins and squash. They can also attack cucumbers, though that's less likely.

What Time of Year Do Squash Bugs Show Up?

Squash bugs usually show up around mid-July in southern Utah and late July to early August in northern Utah. They seem to follow the temperature, so they tend to arrive around the same time each year. That can change. If you plant early or the bugs hatch early, you'll start seeing them sooner.

How Do You Find Squash Bugs?

Look under the leaves. Adults hide there when the sun is out, and that's where they lay eggs. They move around more early in the morning. Eggs are usually laid under leaves but sometimes on top. They're shiny, brown, and round, grouped 10 to a dozen in a patch smaller than half a dime. Once the eggs hatch, you'll see young bugs that look almost like tiny alien giraffes, with a long neck and a little green body.

What Are the Signs of Squash Bug Damage?

Droopy leaves are usually the first sign. The plant just starts to look sick. Leaves may turn yellow, and then they can't make food from sunlight very well.

Look for other signs of damage from the bugs and the plant using energy to fight them instead of growing fruit, like scars, death of young fruit, and sunken areas. (See the [squash bug page](#) in USU's Vegetable Guide for more details.)

Should You Use Insecticides on Squash Bugs?

You can, but I think the best option is to wait until you see bugs and then apply. There are insecticides labeled for squash bugs that you can use preventively, but monitoring first lets you target the bugs when they're easiest to kill.

Go to the store where you shop and look for a product with squash bugs on the label. Then follow that label. Products come and go, and your local store may not carry what someone else recommends. (See USU Extension's guide: [Insecticides for Small-Scale Cucurbit Production](#) for a list of insecticides labeled for squash bugs.)

You're trying to target the little guys. The big ones are hard to even smash sometimes, and they're near the end of their life. They may have already laid eggs, so insecticide won't do as much on them.

If you have a lot of plants, you might use a mix of both. Apply something preventively, then go look for bugs and pull off what you find.

Does Companion Planting Keep Squash Bugs Away?

There isn't enough information to say for sure. Some people try a sacrificial plant instead. They plant a squash or pumpkin that squash bugs like more and plant it earlier.

The bugs go to that plant first. Then you pull it up, kill the bugs on it, and hope they aren't drawn to the plants you put in later.

Can a Plant Recover from Squash Bugs?

Yes, a plant can recover. After you pick the bugs off, let the plant sit for a while, and make sure it's getting enough water and sunlight. I've seen struggling plants bounce back when it cools off in the fall and the bugs move on.

If you care about the plant, you can always nurse it along. You're not hurting anything by leaving it there. If it doesn't recover, go ahead and pull it, because it won't produce much.

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Contact

***Cory Farnsworth, Agriculture and Natural Resources
Agent, Grand County***