

## Pests of Summer Lace Bugs and Squash Bugs

*The boys are back in town -- The boys are back in town --  
Actually, they never left!*

### Lace Bugs

Both adults and nymphs have needle-like mouthparts they use to suck plant sap from the leaf's underside. As a result of the feeding damage, leaves develop pale colored speckling (stippling) on their upper surfaces, giving leaves a grayish cast. When damage is severe enough, the whole leaf appears white and drops early. As a result of their feeding on the underside of the leaf, most people do not see lace bugs until damage is visible.



Adults are about  $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch long. The wings are highly sculptured, giving them a lacy appearance. The adults also have some dark markings on the back and wings. Their markings make them difficult to see when on the leaf. The immature forms, called nymphs, are colorless initially but turn black over time. The nymphs have a number of spines on their backs.

Lace bugs over-winter (that is, survive the winter) as eggs on the underside of leaves. Adult female lace bugs insert their eggs into the leaf tissue and then cover them with a dark splotch of a varnish-like material to seal the egg into the leaf.

In Oklahoma, there are multiple types of lace bugs – Sycamore lace, Oak lace, Elm lace, Azalea lace and Hawthorn lace bug. Each has different markings. A simple test for the presence of lace bugs is to hold a piece of white paper under your branch or stem, then shake the branch to see the pests fall on your paper.

Sometimes natural enemies such as assassin bugs, spiders and predaceous spider mites keep lace bug infestations under control. If not, ornamental insecticides are available. For more information on that, see OSU Extension [Fact Sheet 7306](#).

Lace bugs are not particularly difficult to control with insecticides, but thorough coverage is critical!

### **Squash bugs**



The squash bug is another common pest that over-winters and is important to control before populations build. While it can attack all the cucurbit crops, it prefers squash and pumpkins.

The adult squash bug is rather large, brownish black, and flat-backed. It is about  $5\frac{1}{8}$ -inch (1.6 cm) long and approximately  $\frac{1}{3}$  as wide. They are sometimes called stink bugs.

Squash bug eggs are yellowish brown to brick red in color and are laid in clusters of a dozen or more.

Once hatched, the young, called nymphs, are whitish to greenish gray, with black legs.



*Squash bug & eggs laid uniformly*



*Squash bug nymphs on pumpkin  
with one adult!*

Squash bugs over-winter in protected places as unmated adults. They appear slowly in the spring. They mate and begin laying egg clusters about the time vines begin to grow and spread on the leaves.

The squash bug is secretive in its habits. Adults and nymphs may be found clustered about the crown of the plant, beneath damaged leaves, and under clods or any other

protective ground cover. They scamper for cover when disturbed. The secretive nature of squash bugs can be used to your advantage in controlling these pests.

Place a small, square piece of old shingle or heavy cardboard under each squash plant. As bugs congregate under it for protection, simply lift the trap and smash them with your hoe (or shoe). Other control methods include early planting and removing eggs and nymphs by hand.

Remove and destroy vines and discarded fruit after harvest to eliminate over-wintering sites. Apply insecticides when nymphs are small, as adults are difficult to kill. Always read and follow all label directions. Some helpful tips:

- ✓ Squash bugs are most sensitive to insecticides when immature. Adult bugs tend to be resistant to all common chemicals. Monitor plants for new hatchings and spray immediately when found.
- ✓ The best time to apply pesticides is early morning or late at night (during minimum bee activity).
- ✓ Be sure to spray underneath the leaves where most squash bugs can be found.
- ✓ It is not necessary to treat squash bugs found in the garden during late summer or fall.

For more information on controlling Squash Bugs, see [OSU Fact Sheet 7313](#).