

Bluestem Breezes  
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## **Squash Bugs**

May and June are my favorite months of the year! In a 'normal' year, lawns are green, pastures and ponds are thriving, and the gardens are rapidly growing. I wake up looking forward to the time I will spend working outdoors during the extended daylight hours.

I take great pride in tending to my garden and I thoroughly enjoy providing a meal with the majority of ingredients originating from the garden. Yes, it really is a happy-go-lucky feeling.

It does seem that about the time you feel everything is caught up in the garden, your plans change in a hurry. I was admiring the zinnias that I secretly planted on the edge of my garden (FYI Person B explicitly states every year that flowers do NOT belong in the garden), when I realized that two of my potato plants were moving. Well, technically the mass of grey bugs devouring them was moving.

And that was when the war began. I have heard about motherly instincts and I imagine that something similar took over me at that point. Let's just say I won. Well, for now. I know they will return and I shall be more proactive next time.

So, what were those grey bugs? Squash bugs. They are shield-shaped and typically, they feed on squash and pumpkin plants. Don't be alarmed if they head for other areas of your yard and garden, though.

Due to their hard, adult body, controlling them can be difficult. A better plan is to spray when these insects are small – in the nymph stage. Once they reach the adult stage, a magnitude of eggs are laid and the second generation will become even more huge and devastating to your plants.

Squash bugs actually feed by sucking juice from the plant. Therefore, the only insecticides that control these pests are applied by direct contact. K-State Specialist Ward Upham recommends using general use insecticides such as permethrin (Bug-B-Gon Multi-Purpose Garden Dust, Green Thumb Multipurpose Garden and Pet Dust, Bug-No-More Yard and Garden Insect Spray, Eight Vegetable, Fruit and Flower Concentrate, Garden, Pet and Livestock Insect Control, Lawn & Garden Insect Killer), malathion, rotenone, and methoxychlor to provide control if a direct application is made to young, soft-bodied squash bugs. This means that you MUST spray or dust the underside of the leaves because this is where the insects live.

Keep a close eye on your gardens. Squash bugs aren't the only battles we are fighting. The hotter the temperatures and the further on in the growing season we go, the more issues will arise: insects, diseases, heat stress, etc.

For additional gardening information, visit the Extension Office (215 Kansas, Courthouse, Alma; [kamayer@ksu.edu](mailto:kamayer@ksu.edu); 765-3821). Brand names appearing in this publication are for product identification purposes only. No endorsement is intended, nor is criticism implied of similar products not mentioned. For Bluestem Breezes archives, check out [wabaunsee.ksu.edu](http://wabaunsee.ksu.edu).