

For The Growing Season

By *Ron Bair*

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What about those pesky pests - cucumber beetles (spotted and striped), squash vine borer, and squash bugs.

For the organic grower, I have read that Sabadilla dust or spray works very well to get rid of cucumber beetles and adult squash bugs. For the squash bug nymph and squash vine borer, 5% Rotenone dust or spray is supposed to be very effective. There are other varieties; please inquire.

For the non-organic grower, Sevin dust or spray is very common and works well to get rid of cucumber beetles and the squash bugs in their early adult stages. There are other varieties, too, that are very effective.

All of these dusts or sprays have a wide variety of uses for other vegetables, ornamentals, shrubs and vines. Be sure to **READ THE LABEL**. Sprays seem to be more economical. **NOTE:** When applying any of these dusts or sprays, try to apply at dusk after the bees have left and went home for the evening. Try to apply before the dew sets in so that it will have time to dry. Do not apply dusts or sprays when the vegetation is wet. Sevin spray is known to cause a whitish discoloration to the leaves. This doesn't seem to harm them, however. **NOTE:** Some types of moths visit in the early evening and help in pollination. Be cautious when applying.

One method I have used to kill the squash vine borer, is to cover the vine where the borer appears to be. Cover the vine with good loose soil on top of the damaged area, and pat it down firmly, making a 6" to 8" mound of soil. This will usually smother the borer. Keep watered well. The vine will normally take new roots in the new mound and continue to grow. For those growing on a trellis, this is next to impossible. For these vines, a J-Hook can be made from small wire. Slide the J-Hook up inside the vine and extract the borer. Keep this portion of the vine watered down from time to time over the next couple of days. A "patch" over the damaged area with a wrapped paper towel or cloth helps to contain the moisture. The presence of the borer can be noted by a secreted pile of wet sawdust looking material near their hole(s). There are also methods of syringe injection into the vine to get rid of the borer.

The cucumber beetle thrives on the blooms. It will also eat on the gourds. They are beneficial at the same time though. They do an extremely large amount of pollination. In some cases, they may be the only pollinator. In big masses, they can be very destructive. Try to maintain a controllable level. of them.

Squash bugs like to eat the skin of the gourd. They will usually eat on the bottom side of the gourd lying on the ground. Their eggs will normally be laid on the bottom side of the leaves. The eggs will be a golden brown color, laid in masses of tiny round balls. These can be easily squished with your fingers, or spray the underside of the leaves with an effective substance.

When your gourds are actively growing in the warm humid weather, the pests are usually very active too. These are of my own experiences, and do not intend to promote any certain pesticides. For more information on gourds and gourd events, contact the Indiana Gourd Society.