

# Gardening Basics

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## Insect Inquiry

In order for the Garden Help Desk to assist you when you suspect insect damage, please supply pictures and answers to the questions below. Please note that insect id can be very complex. If in the immature stages, it can even be impossible.

Ideally, the insect should be placed on a white piece of paper for photography. Please send us the following pictures to show:

- Size of insect: use a coin or ruler beside the insect
- One each of top and underneath of insect

If possible, the pictures also need to reveal the following:

- Number of body sections and shape
- Number of legs
- Antennae or feelers
- Wings if present and color
- Mouth parts/shape
- Any webbing, larvae or chrysalis, caterpillar, etc.
- Any damage you suspect the insect caused

Please provide the following information, as appropriate:

- If you are sending picture(s), when were they taken?
- How many of these insects did you see? What were they doing? e.g. clustered on the bark, digging a hole in the ground, hanging from branches by a cobweb, etc.
- When did you see this insect: Date and Time of Day?
- What were the weather conditions?
- Was it in a garden – if so, vegetable or ornamental? Wooded or marshy area? Standing water nearby?
- Was it on a plant – which one and where on the plant? on the ground under a plant – if so, which one? Outside the house – where exactly? Inside the house – where exactly?
- Describe any damage done by this insect. Pictures are important for diagnosis.
  - Examples: Something ate several tomato plant's leaves completely
  - ¾ of the leaves on my (x) plant have round holes
  - Half of the leaves on my elm tree have no tissue – they are like a skeleton
  - I found holes in my wool sweater in my closet and there are dead bugs on it
  - There is a sooty substance on the trunk of my crepe myrtle and it's like rain falling from the branches
- Has the area been disturbed lately? e.g. digging, new construction, heavy rain, new foot traffic, etc.
- Did you bring in new habitats such as mulch? Soil? New plants (provide ID)? or packaging from shipments?
- What other evidence of infestation did you find? e.g. castings, webbing, mounds, honeydew, or frass (poop)