**Pests in the fall**

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The fall garden can see lots of insects and larger pests.

You have probably already experienced cabbage loopers if you are growing broccoli, cabbage, spinach and other greens. The green caterpillars are the progeny of the white butterflies that are flying around the garden area. They start small but grow fast and can denude a young plant very quickly.

Control cabbage loopers with one of the Bt products such as Thuricide, Dipel or Bioworm Control. Spinosad, carbaryl and Malathion also work. Spraying under the foliage where the loopers feed is most effective. Follow the label instructions on the insecticides whether they are organic or manufactured.

So far this year the squirrels in my neighborhood have harvested my pomegranates, apples, peaches and tomatoes. The only method of control that has temporarily worked for me is to use a Havahart trap and relocate the pests. Others will replace the relocated squirrels but it gives you some respite.

Birds can be nearly as greedy as the squirrels. Bird netting works for most birds on blueberries, tomatoes and peaches. It is not practical to use netting on blackberries because of the thorns. On tomatoes, some gardeners put a few red holiday bulbs on the plants. The birds supposedly peck the bulb and draw the conclusion that the soon-to-be ripe fruit is not edible.

Citrus has come under attack the last few years from young grackles. The birds peck at the peeling of the developing fruit and leave black scars. The fruit is still edible but not very attractive. The pecking seems to be meeting some nutritional need of the bird but we haven’t figured out what yet. Covering the fruit with bird netting works but you must begin when the fruit is young. The netting is hard to remove when it is on the growing tree for months through the summer.

Fire ants are still very active in and around the garden. It is a good time of the year to apply bait such as Amdro so the foraging workers can carry it back to the mound. For active hills within the garden, Conserve with Spinosad works well. Fire ant control with acephate can be used for a quick kill outside the garden. Follow label instructions.

Spider mites have not been a major pest this fall because of the rain and cool weather. Reproductive speed slows down with the cool temperatures.

Aphids have appeared on some plants this fall but not to the degree that has occurred in past years. The wasps, lady bugs, lace wings and other predators have done a pretty good job of keeping them under control.

Concerning wasps, it is best to preserve as many nests as possible because of their value in controlling aphids, webworms and other pests. The wasps are generally not very aggressive. My wife and I only spray the nests that are close to the doors or other centers of our activity. If you have someone who is allergic to the stings, you can be more zealous in controlling the nests.

Thrips are scraping insects that can be a problem on roses and other blooms. They even cause the milky color on onion leaves that some gardeners experience in the spring. On roses, the traditional control has been acephate. Spinosad also seems to work. Recognize this damage as flowers with deformed petals with brown edges.

For more information on controlling garden and landscape pests, visit [www.plantanswers.com](http://www.plantanswers.com).

Garden Tasks

Plant new shade trees and shrubs this month so they have time to develop a root system before hot weather arrives.

Fertilize the lawn with a “winterizer” fertilizer. An application now contributes to cold weather tolerance and fast green-up in spring.

Be ready to protect your tomatoes from the first freezing temperatures.

Wildflower seeds should be applied now. Spread them on a sunny site where the seed can reach the soil.