

I have great vegetables this year in my garden but I see a lot of bugs. How do I tell the good bugs from the bad bugs? Mary B. Paso Robles

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That is a great question. Manage pests in a safe manner so that you do not disrupt the life cycle of beneficial insects. Beneficial insects can be effective pest managers and do much of the work for you. Attracting and maintaining beneficial insects is a good first step to managing pests. Some of the more familiar beneficial insects include lady beetles, damsel bugs, green lacewings and a variety of native bees. While adult beneficial insects are easily recognizable, it is helpful to be familiar with the immature stages as well. Lady beetle larvae is black and orange with an alligator-like appearance. Like adult lady beetles, the immatures are effective predators, not only eating aphids but also whiteflies, mites and scale. Green lacewing eggs are tiny oval shaped white specks suspended on a threadlike stalk on leaves. If you see these eggs, put out a "Do Not Disturb" sign! These beneficial bugs will be a great asset to your garden when they hatch.

Some of the pests you want to look out for are aphids, apple codling moth, scale, whiteflies, mites, earwigs and ants. Reaching for a can of insect spray at the first sign of pests can be detrimental to beneficial insects, leaving you with an imbalance of too few predators and pollinators in the garden.

To learn more about the insects in your garden, join us at the Advice to Grow By workshop on pest and beneficial insects on Saturday, August 18, from 10:00 am to noon. Learn about the good bugs and the bad bugs and how to encourage the beneficials to take up residence in your garden. The workshop will be in the auditorium next to the garden so no need for sun screen! Please arrive early as seating is limited.