

## MONTHLY TIPS

By Mary Jane Bosworth

### September

- ✓ Most flowers have now set seeds and they may be collected and saved for the following year. Annuals and biennials are among the easiest to grow from seeds. Some you might want to consider for this project would be: marigolds, zinnias, spider flowers, strawflowers, larkspur, and sunflower. Store seeds in a cool, dry place in a paper envelope or bag.
- ✓ If you will be considering planting spring bulbs for the following year, now is the time to order them, so get out your catalogs or go on-line now.
- ✓ Plant pansies for splashes of winter color.
- ✓ Control winter weeds with a pre-emergent herbicide applied from September 1-15 on shrub planting areas.
- ✓ Divide and replant overgrown perennials such as hostas, coneflowers and daylilies.
- ✓ Plant spring flowering bulbs in the month of October.
- ✓ This is a good time to get your soil tested for next year's plantings.
- ✓ Clean debris out of your garden. Remove spent annuals and cut the tops of perennials.
- ✓ Bring houseplants indoors when temperatures dip below 50. Give them a good bath with soapy water or spray with insecticidal soap. Move plants to shade for a week to condition them to the lower light levels they will receive when they are returned to the house.

### October

- ✓ Now is the time to look for bargains at nurseries.
- ✓ Keep watering so that plants don't get stressed.
- ✓ Finish cleaning up garden beds by pulling out annuals and vegetables. Cut off tops of perennials.
- ✓ Just before frost, dig up sweet potatoes and pick all the green tomatoes which can be wrapped in newspaper and will continue to ripen.
- ✓ Most flowering shrubs can be propagated by hardwood cuttings. Make cuttings 6-8" long and dip in rooting hormone. Set them in garden soil, leaving 2" exposed and keep moist.
- ✓ Store the bulbs of Dahlia, Canna, Caladium, Gladiolus and Tuberous Begonia as they may not overwinter. Lift the roots, tubers or corms about the time of the first killing frost and store in a garage until the soil dries and then shake it off. Cut off the dried stem and place in sawdust or peatmoss and store in a basement or other cool, dry place. These plants cannot withstand freezing.

### November

- ✓ Plan now for spring color and plant spring flowering bulbs.
- ✓ Prepare your vegetable beds by tilling or double digging the beds and adding organic matter.
- ✓ Test your soil.
- ✓ Keep up your garden care and harvest your cool season vegetables.
- ✓ Plant asparagus this month. If you already have some, now is the time to cut back the ferny tops as they turn yellow and brown.
- ✓ Mulch well around figs, pomegranates and other warmth loving fruits.
- ✓ Pick, divide and share perennials.

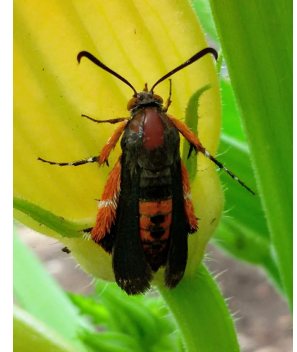
# What's bugging you?

By Eileen Novak?

## Squash vine borer

Some people think that the squash vine borer was sent from heaven to keep us from drowning in zucchini. They may be right. But I think it's a shame that this insect→→

which doesn't look like a moth but is called the squash vine borer moth, would choose your garden to lay its eggs and have its larvae attack your squash. They didn't attack mine because I didn't plant squash this year. We are still finishing up the squash bread and butter pickles I put up last year. If you tend your garden daily, as you should, you'll find these colorful insects. It's ok to pick them off and squish them with your fingers, but do so wearing gloves, please.



It takes almost no time for these insects to wreak havoc on your squash: The moths will lay their egg on the ground next to the stem or on the stem itself. Hours after being laid, the borer caterpillar will penetrate the stem and begin feeding for about 4 weeks. The Borer causes the vine to wilt, collapse, and die rapidly. At this time, the Vine Borer will burrow in the ground 1-2 inches and pupate (Cocoon) over winter and emerge as a moth again next year.

But if you desperately want to grow squash, do not despair! According to Dustin Adcock who published a long paper on this pest at <https://stanly.ces.ncsu.edu/2016/06/beat-the-squash-vine-borer-2/> there are ways to get around these colorful but destructive pests.

First, these insects have a preference! They like straight neck yellow squash, so give some of those to your neighbor and plant crook-necked squash in your own yard.

Second, you can protect the stem where they will most likely be trying to attack the plant. Wrap the stem with aluminum foil, an inch below the surface and two to three inches above. Did you ever get a sandwich wrapped in foil and bite into the foil? Yup, same for the larvae – yuck! And while you are working with the foil, wrap some around your head because you never know when the satellites are going to have a power surge and beam too many Y rays down on us. [note from the Extension Agent: Do not wrap foil around your head, the author was joking ☺].

Third, there are things to spray that do not harm humans or pets but do a number on insects: Bacillus Thuringensis is the main component of these safer sprays. Again, refer to the NC State website for things that have been tested and work well here in North Carolina.

Fourth, you can try your vegetative surgical skills if the infestation hasn't progressed very far. If you see sawdust-like frass (that's insect droppings – sounds better than poop) you can slit open the stem, remove the larvae and bury the cut stem in the ground to try to encourage rooting. Be sure to tune in to General Hospital to brush up on all the operating room technique beforehand.

Lastly, if you did have borers and they attacked your squash, do NOT dispose of the dead vines by putting them in your compost pile!!!! You might help the next generation find their optimal overwintering spot in your still-warm pile and set yourself up for more of the problem next year.

## The Tyro's Corner

By Eileen Novak (Previously published at Blogger.com, reprinted with permission of the author)

If I seem to talk a lot about insects, it's because I encounter them daily. Really! I have cats, cats are messy eaters, and ants seem to be self-appointed clean-up crew. I'd be grateful if I didn't object to them crawling onto the kitchen table looking to clean up my crumbs as well. But the pesky pismires (yes, I used to do WAY too many crossword puzzles) are not the subject of today's discussion.

I had rather a lot of Japanese beetles visit my crepe myrtle this year and I thought that I would just deal with the problem the way my grandfather did when I visited him as a child. Well, almost.

Grandpa took a peanut butter jar because it had a nice wide opening, half filled it with oil and then went around the garden, knocking the pests into the jar to sink beneath the oil and drown. He filled the jar, and the next morning would pour the oil through a strainer and go fill the second jar, burying the expired insects somewhere in the garden. I didn't have that much oil to spend on Japanese beetles so I thought a little dish soap in a jar, shaken to make a head of foam that would make a Bavarian barmaid jealous would be perfectly fine. The first few days it worked perfectly. But then the weather heated up. I mention this because it's my habit in the summer on hot days to wear a tank top with an old long-sleeved shirt of my husband's over it as a sunscreen. It must work because I haven't had to have anything removed by the dermatologist.

Well I went out on this particularly warm morning clad in my tank top and cotton shirt, jar in hand and the Japanese beetles must have been discussing the thinning of the ranks. I started shaking the crepe myrtle blossom, as usual, when the beetle decided not to fall straight down, but flew toward me in a futile cavalry charge. It hit my chest and slid down, to trap itself in the built-in support of the tank top. There I was, digging furiously with my gloved hands to try to remove it and the beetle itself was clawing its way through my cleavage trying to escape! Not fun! It's a really good thing that the bushes are not anywhere that can be seen from the road, because the spectacle was not for public viewing!! Needless to say, I lost interest in bottling beetles for a while.

So if any of you novice gardeners want to try to get rid of the critters, be sure to button up your shirt before you start. You can be sure that I will!

***Editor: Eileen Novak, Vance/Warren Extension Master Gardener***

***Extension Agent: Paul McKenzie***

**305 Young St., Henderson, NC 27536**

**252-438-8188 or 252-257-3640**

**paul\_mckenzie@ncsu.edu**

**<http://vance.ces.ncsu.edu> <http://warren.ces.ncsu.edu>**

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