



Pest Monitor

The main responsibility of the Pest Monitor is checking garden plots for pests and diseases. This includes twice-per-month checks of garden plots for signs of pest and diseases; identifying the issue using available resources, such as the Utah State Extension (USU) Services; and notifying the WCG Garden Manager. If you are unable to complete your responsibilities, please contact the WCG Garden Manager.

Twice-Per-Month Pest and Disease Checks

Community gardeners have various levels of gardening expertise, and may not recognize pest and disease issues when they occur. When unaddressed, one gardener's problem can quickly become an outbreak that affects everyone. Your role is to help prevent this by regularly visiting the garden and looking for the early signs of pest and disease infestations.

From June through October, please check plots for signs of pests and diseases, and leave a green flag in plots with issues. In the early stages of an infestation, signs may be inconspicuous, such as squash bug eggs on the underside of leaves. As the infestation progresses, many pest and disease symptoms can mimic signs of water deficiency, such as wilting, parched, or dead leaves. To rule this out, you can check a plot's subsurface moisture level by sticking your finger a few inches down near the drip lines. If it is dry, it may be an irrigation related issue and you can follow up with the Irrigation Steward. If the area is moist, check for pest and disease issues, but keep in mind that the cause of plant distress may be related to other issues, such as transplant shock, heat stress, root competition from nearby trees, poor soil conditions, inappropriate use of organic fertilizers/pesticides, etc.

Identifying Pest and Disease Issues

You will need to familiarize yourself with some of the basic garden pests and diseases, such as aphids, earwigs, squash bugs, spider mites, cabbage moths, powdery mildew, curly top virus, etc. An excellent resource is the USU Extension handbook, "[Vegetable Pests of Utah](#)", which is available in the garden shed. USU Extension also provides excellent email newsletters that you can subscribe to here: <https://utahpests.usu.edu/ipm/subscriptions>. It is also helpful to have some familiarity with beneficial insects, some of which look very similar to pests. There is a USU "[Beneficial Insect Guide](#)" in the garden shed as well.

If you are unable to positively identify the issue, you can check with other Pest Monitors, or your WCG Garden Manager. You can also contact the USU Extension Help Desk at mastergardener@usu.edu. Include your contact information, as much detail as possible about your issue, and photographs. Please forward any information they provide to the gardener concerned, and cc the WCG Garden Manager and other Pest Monitors to keep them in the loop.

After receiving an email from you with a list of plots with pest or disease issues, including the plot numbers and specific pests, the WCG Garden Manager will notify the affected gardeners and provide treatment options. Once pest or disease issues are resolved in these plots, you should remove the green flag.

Remember, it is only your responsibility to help diagnose pest and disease issues, not treat them. That is the plot renter's responsibility. Please do not do any work in another gardener's plot.

