

David G. Hallauer
District Extension Agent
Crops & Soils/Horticulture

Squash Bugs

No gardener has much tolerance for them: squash bugs. You know the ones. Grey. Hard, shield-shaped back. They're the ones that feed on your squash and pumpkin plants, resulting in unhealthy plants and loss of production.

By the time you recognize the presence of the adults, they are almost impossible to control. That means it's time to scout.

While the recent confirmation of the presence of first generation eggs and nymphs may not mean much now, the second generation they create is often the one that wreaks havoc on the squash family plants in your garden. Identification and control are key.

The eggs are brick-red in color. The nymph stage will be a small green insect with black legs. Both will be found on the *back* side of the leaves, so look closely to find them.

Implementing a control program now can be a huge deterrent to bigger problems later. Insecticides must come in direct contact with the insect to be effective, meaning you must spray/dust the underside of the leaves. Products like permethrin, malathion, and methoxychlor provide control if a direct application is made to young, soft-bodied squash bugs.

Want more information about squash bugs and their control? Check out Squash Bugs from the KSU Home and Horticulture Pest series, available from any of our three District Offices or online at <https://www.bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/MF3308.pdf> . A list of common homeowner products is also available upon request.

Plant Nutrient Analysis for Corn

With a year like this, it's not uncommon to see uneven corn plants within the stand. Some may simply be shorter. Others may be exhibiting shortened internodes or discoloration. The causes are as numerous as the symptoms: too much water, too little water, compaction, or even nutrient deficiencies.

From a nutrient deficiency standpoint, we often talk about the value of soil tests. Another excellent in-season tool you might want to consider – either for diagnostic purposes or to monitor nutrient levels - is plant analysis.

When used for diagnostic purposes, collect comparison samples from both the good and bad areas. Soil samples may be helpful as well, to help define the root of the problem more accurately. For plants less than 12 inches tall, submit the entire plant after it's cut off at ground level. From 12 inches to reproductive stages, collect the top, fully developed (leaf with a collar) leaf. After reproduction, collect the ear leaf (the one below the uppermost developing ear).

Nutrient monitoring in-season can be an excellent way to monitor the crop as well as help solve diagnostic problems. To learn more about what you should test for and what to expect from the subsequent report, check out a recent article from KSU Nutrient Management Specialist Dr. Dorivar Ruiz Diaz available as part of the weekly KSU Agronomy eUpdates available online at https://webapp.agron.ksu.edu/agr_social/article/plant-analysis-for-testing-nutrient-levels-in-corn-341-1 or by e-mailing me at dhallaue@ksu.edu.