

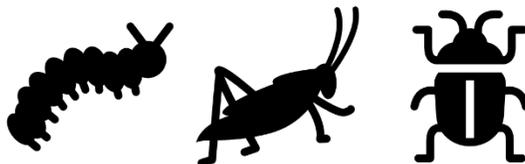


Plant Pests

Plant pests include small animals that dig up plant materials and insects that can kill large numbers of plants if they are not controlled. Recognizing and controlling bugs that hurt plant materials is an important part of grounds maintenance work. Not all bugs found on plants are harmful; for example, ladybugs eat aphids. Aphids are a serious threat to plants, specifically roses. In this unit, we will look at some common insects that can damage plant materials, and some of the ways we can control them without using insecticides.

Mouthparts

Insects that attack plants can be grouped into three categories, according to the damage they do to plant materials.



Chewing and biting insects

This includes insects like caterpillars, grasshoppers and beetles, bite or chew holes in leaves, bark and stems of plants. Signs of damage by chewing and biting insects may include holes in leaves, brown and brittle leaves, and yellow or white spots.

Sucking and piercing insects

This includes insects like aphids, leafhoppers and mealy bugs, have needle-like mouths that they use to pierce and suck out plant juices. Signs of damage by sucking and piercing insects may include yellowing flecks, wilting leaves, curling leaves and/or a shiny, sticky coating.

Borers and miners

Borers and miners are the insect larvae. Larvae are worm-like creatures that hatch from the eggs of some insects. Maggots are the larvae form of flies. These larvae can be buried in the bark, leaves and stems of plants. They carve tunnels in the plant as they eat the plant's nutrients. Flies, beetles and moths are common sources of borers and miners.

Signs of damage include sudden wilting and discoloration, and circular or oval exit holes. Borers like to attack weakened trees and plants. In trees, you will often see signs of borers near the top (also known as the crown) of the tree.

Maintenance (Control)

The best way to help control these pests is to pick them off the plant and destroy them. Borers and miners can be further avoided by maintaining strong, healthy plants. If a plant is infected with borers, you may have to cut off and destroy the infected part by burning or chipping it.



Other Plant Pests

Snails and Slugs

Snails and slugs are not considered insects. They are molluscs, similar to clams and oysters. They eat odd-shaped holes in the lower leaves of plants. Snails and slugs also leave a slimy trail wherever they go. They like dark, damp conditions and usually feed at night. Slugs don't have a shell and are vulnerable to dehydration, whereas snails have a shell that protects them from drying out. If you see snails or slugs on plants, pick them off and destroy them.

Small Animals

Small animals can cause a lot of damage to plant materials. Skunks will dig up lawns as they look for grubs to eat. Squirrels will dig up flower bulbs looking for food. Rabbits and mice can kill some trees and plants by eating their bark. Moles can cause damage by burrowing in lawns and gardens. Animal urine can also cause burn problems in trees, plants and lawns. Recognizing the signs of animal and insect damage is important when you are working as a grounds maintenance worker. You will not always be expected to know what caused the damage, but you will be expected to report the damage to your supervisor. The more pests you can recognize, the better you will be able to do your job.

