Flower Pests

Larry Sagers
Horticulture Specialist
Utah State University Extension

Pest	Hosts	Description	Damage	Control
Ants	Many	Red to black in color Three distinct body sections	Make soil mounds Disturb roots Make vector diseases	Ant bait to control visible ants Control aphids and other sucking insects
Aphids	Chrysanthemum Honeysuckle	Small, white sucking insects	Curling at new foilage	Insecticidal soap Systemic insecticides or malathion Green lacewings, Lady bird beetles, and other predators
Blossom Weevils	Hollyhock	Adult beetle about 1/8" long Dull, grayish brown color	Eat blossoms before they open Skeletonize leaves	Cut and destroy infested seeds and pods Systemic insecticides or malathion
Brown Soft Scale	Poinsettia Ferns	Other greenhouse plants that are used out of doors	Small, flat brown insects about 3/16" long Black, sooty mold Sucking insects that remove plant sap	Remove physically Insecticidal soap Inseceticides containing acephate or alcohol
Bulb Mite	Iris Tulip	Small, white, spider mites	Destroy developing bulbs Allow pathogenic fungi to invade	Soil fumigation Clean bulbs before storage
Bumble Flower Beetle	Sunflower	Adult beetle resembles bumblebee	Chew on some flower petals and bulbs	Clean up any manure or rotting fruit Chemical control is seldom needed
Cabbage Looper	Carnation Geranium Chrysanthemum	Larvae are pale green with white lines on back and sides Moths are gray brown with silvery spot on forewings	Chewed leaves Eat small buds	Insecticide containing permethrin
Carpenter Bees	Yucca	Small bees about 3/16" long Metallic blue or blue-green	Burrow into stems and make cells for young	Cover cut stems with wax Prune damaged stems
Caterpillars	Many	Fuzzy, worm-like insects with many legs Turn into moths or butterflies	Eat leaf and flower edges	Hand pick larvae Dipel Thuricide Permethrin
Corn Earworm	Geranium Gladioulus Rose Sunflower	Large, green, brownish, or reddish colored worms Night-flying moth	Eats petals, buds, and occasionally leaves Prefer corn - but not limited to it	Hand pick larvae B.T. Sevin Malathion

Pest	Hosts	Description	Damage	Control
Cutworm	Zinnia Petunia Other Flowers	Smooth, fat, soft caterpillar	Cut plants off at the base Will climb plants and eat leaves	Paper collars that extend into the soil 2" to prevent damage Fall tilling BT, Dipel or Thuricide
Earwig	Many	Dark reddish brown, elongated segmented insect. Pincers at end of abdomen	Eat holes in petals, leaves, fruits. Can be predators to insects	Yard sanitation Remove sheltering debris. Not social, but congregate in large numbers
Fungus Gnats	Most bedding plants or container plants	Small black flying insects that resemble fruit flies	No damage to plants unless very numerous	Dry out soil Insecticides are almost never needed with outdoor plants
Flea Beetle	Many	Small brown to dark blue jumping beetles	Tiny Circular holes in leaves	Insecticidal soap Most common insecticides
Greenhouse Whitefly	Fuschia Martha Washington Geraniums	Small white butterfly appearing pests One of worst pests	Sticky leaves often grow sooty, black mold Suck plant juices	Wash undersides of leaves Insecticidal soaps on undersides of leaves Sprays containing pyrethrum
Grasshoppers	Everything	Hopping and sometimes flying insect Common to all areas of Utah	Eat Every flower and leaf part	Weed Control Nosema Locustae Poultry Spray pests when young
Lace Bugs	Sunflower Chrysanthemum Asters Scabiosa Others	Tiny insect that feeds on leaves	Skeletonized leaves with fleshy tissue removed leaving veins	Wash leaves with a strong stream of water Use insecticidal soap Most common garden insecticides
Leafhoppers	Ivy Dahlia Others	Small, active white or green insects about 1/8" long	Stripped foliage that lacks chlorophyll Gray-green dirty foliage	Wash leaves to remove pests and residue Insecticides or soaps applied to undersides of leaves Hand pick egg masses or leaves
Leafminers	Columbine Chrysanthemum Delphinium	Small light colored larvae	Lower leaves of plant appear "mined" or have a serpentine pattern in leaves	Insecticide control not recommended Heavily parasitized by other insects
Mealybugs	Fuchsia Lantana Others	White cottony tufts on leaves and stems	Seem to be adapting to climate Sucking insect damage Foliage lacks chlorophyll General plant decline	Hand pick small infestations Scrub with oil Insecticidal soaps Summer weight oil
Narcissus Bulb Fly	Very specific to Narcissus Amaryllis	Adult is similar in size and appearance to small bumble bee Large maggot 1/2 - 3/4" long	Plants don't grow or grow poorly Bulbs eaten or large tunnels inside	Discard affected plants Chemical control is usually not effective

Pest	Hosts	Description	Damage	Control
Root Weevils	Columbine Peony Many others	Black, brown, or gray beetles with a long snout	Notched leaves appear trimmed by pinking shears	Parasitic nematodes Systemic insecticides
Spittlebug	Daisy Mums Many others	Insects resemble large leafhoppers	Froth or spittle covering insect Very little damage unless numerous Plants may be distorted or small	Wash off with strong stream of water
Sunflower Stem Weevil	Sunflower	Small, dark beetle	Feeds on sunflower stems	None recommended Uncommon here
Thrips	Gladiolus Chrysanthemum Aster Iris Delphinium	Brown or Yellow adults very small insects withfeather type wings. Young white without wings.	Leaves turn brown or gray Sandpaper appearance	Hard to control Insecticidal soap Systemic insecticides
Tiger Moths	Petunia	Brown to orange butterfly-like insects	Chewing damage on flowers and leaves	Handpick larvae Use B.T. or systemic insecticides
Tobacco Budworm	Petunia Snapdragon Geranium Nicotine	Green or brown moth caterpillar Blends well with foliage and difficult to locate	Buds and blossoms destroyed Holes in leaves Sticky leaves	Handpick larvae Use B.T. or systemic insecticides
Two Spotted Spider Mite	Hollyhock Marigold Many Others	Small brown spider mite with two distinctive black spots About the size of a grain of sugar	Gray dirty appearance Dried leaves Webbing	Wash undersides of leaves Insecticidal soap Use registered miticides