

Grasshoppers

Most people don't start to think about grasshoppers until summer when they become very noticeable because of their large size. Unfortunately, that large size also means that they eat more and usually at that stage they have wings and can fly to wherever they want to go. If you want to reduce grasshopper damage in the garden, it's best to start looking for grasshoppers now and manage them when they are small nymphs and don't have wings to fly away.

Grasshoppers have chewing mouthparts that they use to feed on plants causing damage to foliage, fruits, and vegetables. They have an incomplete life cycle with three life stages- egg, nymph, adult- with the nymphal instars looking similar to adults but without fully developed wings. Eggs hatch in spring and continue into summer, taking 1-2 months for grasshoppers to reach the adult stage.



Turning over soil in areas before planting can expose grasshopper eggs which may lead to a reduced hatch rate. Controlling weeds in and around the property can help reduce food sources as well as egg laying sites. Grasshoppers also have natural enemies, and many may die from fungus, protozoa, nematodes and predators such as beetles, robber flies, birds and small mammals.

Early season grasshopper control can utilize low impact options such as vacuuming insects from plants, insecticidal soaps, horticultural oils during cooler temperatures, or botanicals (just remember that oils and botanicals are broad-spectrum and can kill beneficial and pest insects that come into contact with the pesticide).

For more information or help with identification, contact Wizzie Brown, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Program Specialist at ebrown@ag.tamu.edu.

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