

## **OL 304 Assignment Two Discussion**

### **Vegetable Garden Care and Maintenance for Family Gardens and Community Gardens.**

**Center for Sustainable Development:** <https://csd-i.org/vegetable-garden-care-family-gardens-community-gardens/>

This week we're going to study pests and their control. I suggest that we focus our study of pests on small insects and snails and slugs. We will have to save larger animals like dogs, rabbits and goats, and diseases and fungi for another time. Animals can be controlled by fencing, but you might need the help of your local agricultural extension agent to handle diseases.

Insect pests vary tremendously by region, temperature, humidity, and altitude. So it will be of more value to you to discover what are the important insect pests for home gardeners in your region -- than for me to give you specific pests and ways of guarding against them.

#### **Part One: Learning About Local Pests**

Much like we did in the first few assignments of 303, you investigated local nutritious foods and then in your workshop during assignment three you collected a more complete list of local foods -- and their local names -- from your workshop participants.

We're going to do the same thing this week -- but with insects. Perhaps you have a pamphlet on agricultural insects for your region, perhaps you could talk to associates and colleagues, but a valuable resource will be the agriculturalist that you worked with in 303 -- and your new community of gardeners.

I would look around for a local home gardening resource handbook -- frequently research on problem insects has already been done for home gardens in your area -- and at a level of detail that is appropriate for your community members.

Your agricultural contact may be more highly specialized, and maybe more highly focused on economic crops rather than on home gardens. However, if you can identify potential threats, he or she may have some creative solutions for dealing with them.

And then you'll want to keep your eyes open when you visit your community members' gardens; keen observation on your part and collection of pests in plastic bags (to show to the agriculturalist) will be very beneficial. Your gardeners may have spotted additional insects -- or have had to deal with them previously. But something that will be very useful will be to begin developing a cross-reference of local names, nationally used names, and scientific names.

#### **Part Two: Learning about local pest control solutions**

Much of pest-control is based on common sense. The healthier your soil is, the healthier your plants will be. The better that your plants are watered and fertilized, the healthier the plants will be. Strong, healthy plants will be able to better defend themselves from plants.

Confusing insects by planting multiple species of vegetables in one bed, and by planting aromatic plants (such as marigolds, garlic and onion) that confuse an insect's ability to smell their favorite meal are another good ploy. Changing the position of vegetables from one bed to a different bed with each new planting is another good tactic.

Encouraging beneficial insects that prey on destructive insects is also a viable tool.

Then, there are natural sprays such as mixtures of hot peppers and garlic that can deter insects. Your gardeners may have traditional techniques, and your agricultural agent may have some good ideas too. At some point, chemical insecticides may be required, but avoid them for as long as you can. They are expensive, they aren't healthy, and they can also kill valuable beneficial insects and birds.

Much like what we learned in the last assignment, one of the most important things that gardeners can do for pest-control is to look carefully at their garden every day. Sometimes they can pick insects off by hand, but also, if they detect an insect invasion at the very beginning they can take offensive action and potentially prevent the infestation.

One of the resources that I'm introducing this week is a section from a book that discusses integrated pest management -- or IPM.

Please move on to Assignment Two Homework.