

MY VIEWS: Squash and cucumber pests

The pest that challenges most gardeners and their squash is the squash vine borer. I have managed to offset this pest pressure by delaying planting to miss peak egg-laying time. This year was definitely a delayed start as we waited for things to warm up and dry out. I also use row covers, lifting them in the morning so bees can do their pollinating than covering them during the day when the mama wasp of the vine borer does her work. But ultimately, I think my best defense is choosing Romanesco types of zucchinis like 'Costata' and 'Gadzukes' which prove more resistant than your average yellow or green types.



JENEEN WICHE

The tell-tale sign that the squash vine borer has struck is evident in the stem of the plant. First keep your eye out for the tiny eggs that are laid on the stem, the eggs may appear to be specks of soil so look closely. They are tiny, flat, and shiny mahogany in color; destroy the eggs and you eliminate the next generation. If they mature, the larvae will travel to the

base of the stem to feed which ultimately cuts off all nutrients to the plant. Another sign that the wilt of your squash is due to the vine borer is a trail of "sawdust" and yellow excrement where they have poked holes at the base of the stem. Once the yellow material is evident, they have already entered the stem where they mature to their borer stage. You can split the stem open with a sharp knife to remove the borer, but you must be careful to cover the injured part of the stem with soil; water well and hope that it will recover. Don't bother if there is a major infestation. There is nothing you can do to revive a dying plant.

If you have a history of squash vine borers it is a good idea to turn the soil of your garden (if it is not frozen) several times throughout the winter to expose any overwintering larvae in the soil. And then follow up with either late planting, row covers or planting a resistant variety.

Just like tomatoes, squash also suffer from blossom end rot. Blossom end rot is caused by extremes of wet and dry

that results in a calcium deficiency in the soil thus affecting the developing fruit. Your best defense is to irrigate deeply and on a regular basis to avoid fluctuations in soil moisture. If blossom end rot does occur you will notice a soft, wet spot on the blossom end of the fruit. To restore the calcium level, you can apply a solution of 4 teaspoons of 96% calcium chloride powder per gallon of water to the plant. There are also several commercial products already mixed (and in spray bottles) that serve the same purpose. I always keep some handy for my tomatoes and squash.

Another pest of squash is the squash bug, and I have found that they are super easy to control organically. Just lay a board on the ground next to your plants and in the morning go out to the garden and walk on the board. The bugs that took refuge overnight beneath the board will be crushed!

If your cucumbers suddenly wilt you can blame the cucumber beetle, both spotted and striped. This little yellow and black beetle is a chewing insect that spreads the wilt disease. It is especially troublesome because it spreads mosaic viruses and bacterial wilt,

both of which have no remedy.

Bacterial wilt on cucumbers is marked by the wilting of several leaves on a plant; followed by the plant's eventual death. During the process of dying the fruit stops maturing and shrivels up. Cucumber beetles carry the bacteria in their mouths and infect the plant as they feed. A sure way to confirm bacterial wilt is to cut open the stem of a wilted leaf, squeeze the sap out, and if you see a white substance touch your knife to it and see if it oozes out in a fine thread as you draw the knife away...this is the bacteria. The beetles need to be controlled to avoid bacterial wilt since there is no other treatment. Smash the beetles when you see them or use pyrethrin to control them. It took me 3 plantings to get my cucumber seeds to germinate and persist in the garden so I will be watching closely for wilt. I think my problems were caused by cut worms, so I sprinkled diatomaceous earth after sinking the seeds and I finally have some cucumber plants pushing up the trellis! And a little Deer Scram repellent keeps the bunnies and ground hogs to a minimum!



Besser Bilt provides better built products

STEPHEN THOMAS
THE PIONEER NEWS

PIONEER VILLAGE — Besser Bilt is a Pennsylvania Dutch term meaning better built.

That's why the company located in Pioneer Village selected the name, providing quality work for its customers. The Bullitt County Chamber of Commerce welcomed its newest member with a ribbon cutting ceremony, welcoming general manager Lee Brasher to the community.

Besser Bilt features portable storage buildings, Amish-built sheds, and metal buildings including garages, carports and barns. Swing sets are also available. Brasher introduced

Mahlon Schlabach, owner of Country Cabins, the company that supplies many of the building. Schlabach said most of the buildings are manufactured at a company location in West Union, Ohio, with another location set in Russellville, Kentucky.

Besser Bilt also acquires metal buildings from Tennessee Steel, a company located in Dixon, Tennessee.

A sampling of available buildings and shed can be viewed at Besser Bilt, located at 5000 Old Highway Preston North, at the intersection of the John Harper Highway. Open hours are 10 am to 6 pm weekdays and 10 am to 3 pm Saturdays.

For more information call (502) 999-3633 or go to www.besserbiltsheds.com.

CROWN

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Contestants in the past have mentioned that the most difficult part of the competition is the interview with the three judges before the event becomes more public on the runway under the pavilion. There, the girls have a swimwear segment before changing into evening wear. "Me personally I love to talk," Gerkins said when asked about meeting the judges. "So, I enjoyed that

part of it. I found that part to be fun.

Gerkins is the 16-year old daughter of Brent and Megan Gerkins. She has green eyes and brown hair.

"My parents mainly," she said when asked who drives her forward. "They support me. If I mention a pageant coming up they will say 'let's go.' I could not be more thankful to them."

On her contestant form, Gerkins used the words "driven", "authentic" and "caring" when asked to provide three words that described herself. Besides

basketball, Gerkins mentioned "working out, going shipping, spending time with friends and family as well as helping her dad on the farm."

Gerkins is also very interested in sports.

She mentioned that she would like to pursue a career that includes sports. She said that she loves listening to Kentucky Sports radio and watching Kentucky football and basketball games.

The high school junior is actively involved in her community as giving back means a lot to her. She started

her platform "Hope in Motion" to bring awareness to those who struggle with mental health and self-esteem issues while also bringing awareness to suicide. She has also volunteered at local food banks, animal shelters and with the Meade County Angel Ministry.

The future plans for Gerkins include attending the University of Kentucky to pursue a degree in broadcast journalism with a minor in communications. From there she would like to follow a sports career with those degrees and be on the

sideline of some of the biggest sports games in the world.

In the short-term, Gerkins was looking forward to returning to Bullitt County to assist with some of the other pageants on the agenda this week.

"I was very proud of compete in the Miss Bullitt County Fair event," she noted.

There were ten girls who took the stage on Monday seeking the 2026 Miss Bullitt County Fair crown.

The first runner-up was Makenzie Marshall. She is the 15-year-old daughter of Ken and Amy Marshall. She

will be a junior at Lexington Christian Academy during the upcoming school year. Marshall has blue eyes and blonde hair and then three words she used to describe herself were "emphatic", "outgoing" and "driven."

The second runner-up was Rayahna Bunnell, the 17-year old daughter of Korbin and Heather Bunnell. She is a freshman at Elizabethtown Community and Technical College. The three words that she selected to describe herself included "dedicated", "resilient" and "strong".

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