

## Insects ruin even best gardens

by Bill Hansen

If you were able to plant "early" vegetables within the past three or four weeks, everything should be up and looking good by now. Those tender young leaves are also looking good to several kinds of insects who, if left unchecked, will bore, chew, suck and otherwise lay to waste much of what you have worked so hard to grow.

It has been observed that healthy plants can usually withstand an invasion of insects but that such an invasion is often fatal to plants which are diseased or otherwise unhealthy. While I agree with this in most situations, there are times when plants are quite healthy, show no sign of disease, but are suddenly under siege. In these instances, when it's a choice between using an insecticide or losing the crop, I go for the insecticide.

Insecticides, if used properly and judiciously are an important part of gardening. This does not mean I advocate a helter-skelter use of insecticides and pesticides. Far from it. But, sometimes we

are faced with a dilemma and must choose between the lesser of two evils. To illustrate, if you have noticed lately very small, black bugs on your peas or potatoes that seem to hop or fly about as you work in the garden, you probably have an infestation of the flea beetle. This insect, if left unchecked will surely injure tender young vegetable leaves and severely retard growth. Knowing how damaging the flea beetle can be, I dust all plants that the little varmints are feeding on with "Sevin", which is an insecticide commonly available in garden stores. The container has very explicit instructions for its use - and disposal. And it works.

This week, after the rain stops, you should cultivate very lightly between rows to break up the crust of soil that has formed on the surface. Also, if you haven't already done so, early vegetables such as lettuce and radishes probably need thinning, even if they were thinned soon after they were up. Follow directions on the seed packet and you will have healthier and more vigorous plants, and a more abundant harvest.

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