

Pest Identification - Legumes

Pea & Bean family – all types of pea and bean



APHIDS (GENERAL)

Small, soft-bodied pear-shaped insects less than a tenth of an inch long. Aphids may be beige, green, yellow or almost black and tend to congregate in groups on new growth or in leaf crevices. They can slow growth, causing stunting and mottled or yellowing leaves. Along with loss of plant juices from direct feeding, aphids can spread plant diseases.

Prevention and control:

Check plants often for early outbreaks. Clip off and compost leaves holding aphid clusters. In small outbreaks, a high-pressure spray from a garden hose can help to blast the aphids off. Plant flowers to attract aphid predators – lady beetles and their larvae are great predators, while syrphid flies and lacewings will also feed on aphids.



SLUGS & SNAILS

Slugs and snails move about on moist leaves, mulch and soil. Species can be as small as a pea or as big as your thumb. Slugs and snails chew holes with smooth edges into leaves, and small seedlings can be entirely eaten up. Feeding is most common at night or in rainy weather. Look out for a glistening trail of slime on stems or leaves that have been visited by slugs or snails.

Prevention and control:

Natural predators include frogs, toads, snakes, turtles, ground beetles, firefly larvae and many birds. Slugs and snails get an electric shock when they cross a copper barrier, so use copper tape around planters or raised beds to deter them. Slugs can be lured into pit traps made by placing an inch of beer into small open containers sunk into soil up to their rim. You can also hand pick slugs then drown them in a pail of soapy water.



JAPANESE BEETLES

Brightly colored half-inch long beetles with copper-colored backs and metallic green heads, Japanese beetles usually feed in small groups, chewing large holes in the leaves. They fly away or drop to the ground when they are disturbed.

Prevention and control:

Use row covers to protect plants during the six to eight week period from midsummer that the beetles are feeding. Pole beans are often damaged by Japanese beetles, but because the infested leaves are at eye level, the beetles are easier to gather. Hand-pick the beetles by knocking them off into a bowl of soapy water. A fungal disease called milky spore can be introduced into lawns, where it infects the larvae.



CUTWORM

Blackish-gray to brown smooth-skinned caterpillars that hide in the soil by day and feed at night. The larvae feed on the roots and foliage of seedlings, often girdling them at the soil line and causing the top of the plant to shrivel and die. In summer, cutworms can crawl up plants and chew holes in the leaves that look like slug damage.

Prevention and control:

Include plenty of perches to attract insect-eating birds, which can help prevent problems. Frequent shallow cultivation can expose and kill cutworms. As soon as you suspect cutworm damage, use a fork and flashlight to find the culprits at night. Check hourly and catch them as they emerge. You can trap the adult moths with solar landscape lights set above broad pails of soapy water.



MEXICAN BEAN BEETLE

These ladybeetle cousins are yellowish on emerging before maturing to yellow-orange with black dots. The larvae are yellow, spiny, soft-bodied creatures, which develop black-tipped spines. Both the beetles and their larvae rasp at the undersides of bean leaves, causing them to become skeletonized. In severe cases they may feed on the young pods.

Prevention and control:

Plant nectar-rich flowers to attract their many natural enemies. You can grow bush beans under row covers to prevent damage, or grow an early crop to avoid the main period of damage in midsummer. Destroy any beetles you come across and regularly check for their eggs and larvae, scraping them off with a dull knife.



WEEVILS

Weevils of beans and southern peas (cowpeas) may be tiny but they can badly damage peas and beans destined for dry storage. The adult weevils are just a tenth to a quarter-inch long, enabling them to go unnoticed as they lay their eggs on young pods. Damage is often only revealed after harvesting, when the beans or peas become riddled with holes and little worms within weeks of picking.

Prevention and control:

If you can, sow your beans very early, before the weevils are about. Dig the plants in promptly after harvest. Alternatively pick the beans while they are still green and blanch them thoroughly before freezing. This should kill off any eggs or larvae that were present.

Report any bugs you've seen in your garden to: BigBugHunt.com



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FLEA BEETLE

Tiny dark brown to black beetles, about a tenth of an inch long, can be seen on leaves. When disturbed, the beetles jump away using their powerful rear legs. Flea beetles chew tiny round holes in the topsides of leaves, with damage to leafy greens most severe in spring. New leaves are usually damaged first, giving them a lacy appearance.

Prevention and control:

Always rotate crops, and use row covers to protect susceptible crops. Manage outbreaks by making white, sticky traps to catch the flea beetles as they jump. Grow plenty of flowers to attract beneficial insects, which prey on flea beetles.

SPIDER MITES



Spider mites are attracted to drought-stressed plants. Under dry conditions above 80°F leaves may become stippled with tiny yellow dots that run together to make the leaves look sun-bleached. Faint webbing is often present on leaf undersides. Spider mites suck plant juices, weakening plants in heavy infestations.

Prevention and control:

Keep plants watered and encourage beneficial insects such as lady beetles. Clip off and compost heavily infested leaves. Thoroughly spray plants with water, taking care to rinse leaf undersides. If the mites persist, repeat this spraying then cover plants with an old sheet for a couple of days – the shady, moist conditions will seriously set them back.