

PREVENTION

It's time to roll up the welcome mat.

After a busy growing season patrolling your vegetable beds for pests, it is almost time to hang up your garden gloves for the year, but there is one task you need to get to. An hour spent on pest prevention at the end of the season will help you to reap a healthy harvest next spring. If you had some pest problems, it is time to learn how to be a really bad host!

Many garden pests like to spend the winter hidden in decaying plant matter like vines and stalks, fallen leaves and spoiled vegetables. Be sure to clear the beds of *every* part of the spent plants. If the plant was healthy, then you can move it to the compost pile. If you have enough space, build your compost pile several yards from the veg beds. (If space is tight, check to see if your town has low cost compost bins for sale.) If there were insect eggs on the discarded plants, or small larvae in with the leaves, a little distance makes it harder for the hatched adults to find your precious seedlings next spring. Your beds should be bare of everything except your herbs, or any greens you are planning on leaving until killed by frost.

Home-garden compost piles don't get hot enough to kill off pest eggs and larvae, so if you had pests, e.g., flea beetles or squash bugs, discard the spent plant stalks and leaves either by putting them on the burn pile, or out with the trash. Some towns will collect plant and leaf matter to create giant compost piles, which heat up sufficiently to kill off the pests.

Some insect pests like squash vine borers and tomato hornworms like to burrow 2-10 inches into the soil and wait out the winter that way. Once you have removed all the plant material from your beds, use your hand fork and trowel to gently turn over the soil to expose the pests; remove and crush those that you find.

IN THE GP LENDING LIBRARY

Garden Insects of North America: The Ultimate Guide to Backyard Bugs | Whitney Crenshaw

The Organic Gardener's Handbook of Natural Pest and Disease Control | Jeff Ball