

SQUASH BORER

Photo Credit:
Jenn Forman-Orth

Are your squash plants suddenly wilting even though you've watered them well? Check the base of the plant for a hole with yellowish material resembling sawdust spilling out. This is the entry point of a squash vine borer larva which has decided to snack upon the insides of your lovely squash vine.

The adult moth that laid eggs in such a fortunate spot as the base of your squash plant is 1½ inches long with a red body, black wings and black spots visible on the body between the wings. The moth will lay tiny, dull-red eggs in late spring at the base of the stem or on the underside of leaves. Once the eggs hatch, larvae emerge and tunnel into the stem of the plant. As the name suggests, they're fond of squash-family plants, which includes pumpkins and other winter squashes.

Luckily, even if your plant has begun to wilt, it can likely still be saved. If you've located the borer's entry point, take a sharp knife and, starting at the hole in the base of the stem, slit the stem lengthwise.

You'll eventually come across the borer; remove and destroy it. Next, settle the sliced bit of squash vine under a layer of soil and keep the soil moist to encourage new roots to grow. To prevent squash vine borer from digging in in the first place, keep an eye out for the eggs and destroy them. You can also spray the base of the plants with *Bacillus thuringiensis* (BTK) once a week in late spring and early summer to ward them off.



Clockwise from top: Squash vine borer moths, side and top views (credit: Jenn Forman-Orth); a borer larva after being fished out of the vine; wilted pumpkin vines

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