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The Prairie Gardener's Book Of Bugs: A Guide To Living With Common Garden Insects



Synopsis

The very appearance of an unfamiliar bug on a dearly beloved tree, shrub, or plant is enough to set the alarm bells ringing for prairie gardeners, inspiring such burning questions as: What is it? What does it eat? Is it friend or foe? What can I do about it? Authors Nora Bryan and Ruth Staal answer these questions and more. Written with skill, insight, and humour, their book describes and discusses over a hundred insects, spiders, mites, slugs, and earthworms that frequent prairie gardens. Part I: Living with Bugs comprises six chapters that provide background information on all aspects of prairie garden bugs. Learn about their similarities, differences, and lifecycles; their collective importance to the health of a garden; diagnosing trouble; cultural controls; and the "Pandora's bottle" of pesticides. The discussion on pesticide is particularly enlightening, giving gardeners the tools to make good choices when it comes to buying and applying chemicals to garden pests.

Book Information

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A Few Fascinating Facts About Common Garden Insects From The Prairie Gardener's Book of Bugs Insects' lives are usually very short, but a few insects, most famously the cicadas, may live for over a decade, spending most of their lives as underground larvae. The males of a large number of spider species must approach a female with caution and give her all the right signals before she accepts him as a mate instead of a meal. Dragonflies and damselflies hunt by sight and have some of the best eyesight of all insects. They catch flying insects between their legs and take them to a roosting site to be eaten. The bright coloring on many insects means "don't eat

me—l am poisonous." Underwing moth caterpillars are camouflage experts: they have uneven fringes on their sides that can hug tree bark, thus eliminating even a shadow that might expose them. Some prairie bumblebees are 25 mm (1 in.) long. When honeybees find a good source of nectar, they do a dance in front of hive-mates, dubbed the "waggle dance," which somehow explains to the watching bees where to find this new source of nectar. Aphids are born pregnant—they will return! Woolly elm aphid secretions turn the soil blue. Wood ants "herd" aphids: the ants protect aphids from predators, and in return, they eat the honeydew that aphids secrete. When wolf spider spiderlings hatch, they immediately hop onto their mother's back where they remain for a week or so. They do not eat during this time, but do drink water that accumulates on the mother's back; if they fall off, they must get back on or be left behind. Grasshoppers "sing" by rubbing a pegged leg against a front wing (stridulation). Males serenade females, which have hearing organs on the base of the abdomen, rather than ears, to hear this love song. In the nineteenth century, migratory swarms of the Rocky Mountain grasshopper blackened the sun, caused train wheels to slip on the tracks, and clogged up sewers when it rained. Newly emerged spittlebug nymphs protect themselves with a foamy covering, produced by mixing plant juices with juices from their glands; as the liquid exits a spittlebug’s anus, it mixes with air to form bubbles, which may make them an instant hit with your kids. Lady beetles can squirt a bad-tasting, smelly blood from thin spots along their jointed legs when frightened; it's a good defense, and birds and spiders don't bother them twice. Blister beetles produce a potent chemical called cantharadin, which can cause blistering on skin. A European blister beetle has been ground up over the centuries and sold as "Spanish Fly" to gullible people, most famously as an aphrodisiac. The actual effect on the private parts of duped males is most unpleasant and unlikely to result in amorous adventures. Leafcutter bees chew perfectly round holes in the leaves of roses. As you drive through the prairies, you may see fields with rows of open outhouse like sheds—these are man-made accommodations for the alfalfa leafcutter bee, used by farmers to pollinate alfalfa crops. Crab spiders really are somewhat crab shaped and can walk sideways and backwards. An orb-web weaver’s web has radial lines made of dry silk, and spiral lines made of sticky silk; the spider avoids sticking to its own web by scampering along the dry radial threads.

Ruth Staal is a gardening columnist for The Calgary Herald. She has worked for over 30 years in one of Calgary's largest nurseries. Nora Bryan writes for the "Calgary Gardener", the publication of the Calgary Horticultural Society.

An intelligent and humorous guide to the common insects we all encounter. Don't kill that really creepy looking black beetle!!! for it is a ladybug larva that, one day soon, will change into a beautiful helpful, aphid-eating, friend to your garden. Nora Bryan and Ruth Staal have produced an extremely helpful guide to increase awareness of the fantastic world of insects, and I can't help but love the illustrations....because I am the illustrator. Nora Bryan & Ruth Staal were dear women to work with, and we forged friendships that are everlasting. Grace Buzik

It's great to find a book that is actually of practical use. I like the mix of gardening info and Nature info. I've already identified a few critters in the garden and figured out which ones (there was only one) to keep an eye on for problems. The illustrations are top-notch. I like books that aren't dumbed-down but the average gardener can still use. I hope there are more books written by people who garden in our climate and don't just rehash info that is more relevant to warmer zones.

Everyone who gardens, especially those who live in the prairies of Canada or the Northern USA, should read this book! It not only has great information about entomology and the individual bugs but also details about how to live with them. The illustrations are wonderful too! As a teacher, I suggest that it would make an excellent resource for school libraries as well because it's not only dry facts but is written in a manner that is easy and fun to read....

The book is a refreshing approach that combines gardening and natural history. I like the balance. A useful guide but also a good read on its own. The best part is having a book written about the prairies by authors who garden on the prairies. Too many books miss the mark for our region but this one is on target for the insect questions I've had. I hope more garden writers in our region pick up the torch as this book does.

We all enjoy the book. I liked to know what to do about the insects in our garden. Turns out most of the insects are just fine and no threat to any plants. Our kids like the book to just snoop around and be able to learn more while having fun.

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