

## OL 301 Assignment Seven Discussion

Online Learning: OL 301

Learn How to Grow a Family Vegetable Garden

Center for Sustainable Development:

<https://nonprofit.csd-i.org/learn-how-to-grow-a-family-vegetable-garden/>

### How You Can Grow a Vegetable Garden: Fresh, nutritious vegetables for your family.

#### This week's resources on the Student Resource Page:

<https://nonprofit.csd-i.org/301-student-resource-page/>

OL 301 Assignment Seven Homework Instructions

OL 301 Assignment Seven Discussion

[8 Organic Ways to Get Rid of Cabbage Worms & Cabbage Moths](#)

Google search: [cabbage moth caterpillars](#)

**Discussion 7.** Practice insect vigilance-organically.

**This Week's Goal:** To get a sense of what insects you may expect in your garden—and what you can do about them.

You just need to keep your eye out for insects so you can nip them in the bud. Literally.

My main experience with insects is that they're not a huge problem where I live. However, that said, if I get distracted with work or play, certain insects can get away from me and get out of hand. So my goal is once a week to take 10 minutes to look at my garden (mostly on the backside of the leaves) to see if I have any eggs, caterpillars, or aphids. If caught at once, you can usually dislodge them with your fingers or a blast of a hose.

The other thing to consider is that some of my vegetable plants may get minor insect damage—but not enough to cause serious harm to the plant. So over time you will learn that small holes in tomato leaves or Swiss chard leaves might not amount to much overall damage.

So this week, our main goal is to be to identify which insects we might need to be looking for. Much of this is geographical. So for example, when I lived in California we had a terrible problem with slugs, but were I'm living now I've never seen a slug.

But here is a list of some of the insects that I have seen and that I have had problems with because I didn't stay on top of my weekly inspection.

1. Whitefly: they can create a real mess if you let them get out of hand.
2. Aphids. Ditto.
3. Spider mites on my Kaffir lime tree leaves.
4. Cabbage moth caterpillars on my Brassicas. Kale, broccoli, cauliflower mustard greens, radishes, turnips, Asian greens and cabbage. The one that I have the most difficulty with are the Asian greens in the mesclun mixture because as the goal is to plant them thickly and harvest them in their quite small it can be difficult see the cabbage moth caterpillars.
5. Roly-Poly's. These little guys hide under leaves or clumps of compost during the day and at night they come out and eat small green plants. My biggest challenge is that they nip at seedlings at their base in my seed trays (they don't eat the whole thing!) which kills them.



Cabbage moths are a real problem among vegetables that belong to the brassica family. They lay small white or pale yellow eggs on the underside of leaves (if you look for them and find them squishing them will control them!). When the eggs hatch into caterpillars they immediately begin feeding on the surrounding plant matter. They leave small holes behind which grow into larger holes as the caterpillars grow; on some Asian mesclun greens they will eat everything except the leaf veins.

If you can spot the holes you can frequently find the caterpillars on the underside of the leaf and you can remove them. The caterpillars will continue to eat for several weeks until they're old enough to form a chrysalis and will eventually transform into the white cabbage moth.

On the left, you can see the underside of a leaf with a caterpillar surrounded by holes where they've eaten the plant matter. Below that is the top side of the leaf we can also see telltale caterpillar droppings. The bottom leaf is a healthy unaffected specimen. Look at the resource: "8 Organic Ways to Get Rid of Cabbage Worms & Cabbage Moths" for ideas on how to prevent/get rid of this problem.

There are many, many other insects which may be local to your geographical location that I don't experience. So the best thing to do is to identify which ones you are likely to find. This can be best done by talking to other gardeners or your neighbors. Or, you might find that you have an extension agency at your local university which will have flyers on local insects which you can download.

#### In summary, here are several ideas:

1. Research which vegetables you are growing that may have challenges with insects in your geographical location.
2. Research which insects may be the troublemakers for those vegetables.
3. Research what organic methods you can use to prevent or control these insects.
4. Have a pleasant cup of coffee in your garden once a week and inspect your plants. Copyright © Tim Magee