

## **“Good Insects” by Sally Cureton**

Sometimes we forget that most of the insects found in our gardens are actually helpful. So before spraying, stop a moment and remember that there really are many, many beneficial insects that will eat the pests that harm your plants. Many of these will also eat plant waste and break it down into fertilizer. Others provide food for birds and other animals that eat pests, and some will aerate and improve your soil. Using toxic pesticides kills both good bugs and bad bugs, which gives the bad guys a head start, so you end up having to spray more in the future. These same pesticides may also kill birds that eat the bugs. They also definitely harm water quality when the rain washes them off your yard into our streams.

So what are some of these “good insects?”

1. Ground beetle. They are usually shiny and may be very ferocious-looking, but are not known to bite people. Usually black or with a metallic sheen of another color on their wings, they feed at night and hide in the soil during the day.
2. Rove beetle. These guys resemble a tiny scorpion and are very fast moving. They are also black and may be up to one inch long.
3. Soldier beetle. A smaller beetle, about ½ inches in length, they have a black abdomen and a bright red head or thorax.
4. Assassin bug. A vicious-looking bug, it will be up to 1 inch long, with a cone-shaped head and wide curving beak. Their bite can be painful to humans. Some will squeak if caught. They are incredibly voracious predators of many garden pests.
5. Green Lacewing. Adults have delicate, light green bodies with large clear wings. About ½ inches long, they are also voracious eaters.