

## Part Gardener, Part Predator

**When Susan Brackney tends her luscious garden, she often has to play predator to pests.**

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"One of my eggplants -- ravaged by flea beetles. You win some. You lose some..." ~SBI can't blame them.

I mean, were I an aphid or, say, a squash vine borer, my garden's the first spot I'd hit for the all-you-can-eat veggie buffet. It's big, and there are still plenty of weeds in which to hide.

Nevertheless, I do what I can to thwart any insect invaders -- and I do it without insecticides.

For instance, when I catch flea beetles trying to turn my potato and eggplant leaves into lace, I blast them with a hard stream of water.

And in the case of those polka-dotted asparagus beetles? I handpick them in ones and twos -- sometimes interrupting one of their romantic interludes in the process! -- and drop them unceremoniously into a bucket of soapy water that has a tightly fitting lid to prevent their escape. Grim, I know ...

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"My salad garden, which is doing very well." ~SBAAt least the cloud of white flies that spontaneously appeared around my tomato seedlings has an easier time of it.

Now residing on my mature marglobe and yellow pear plants outdoors, the tiny, white creatures rise up and cling to my arms and dark T-shirt whenever I weed or water, but I've always thought they were more pretty than problematic. And I've learned that keeping my tomato plants well-watered and mulched with rich compost is usually enough to protect them from any onslaught.

~ Susan

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