

Indian River County
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Name That Insect!

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Of all the million types of insects in the world, less than one percent are harmful to plants.

You have got to be kidding! That was my reaction the first time I heard this fact. I always thought the opposite was true. It never occurred to me that there likely are more species of beneficial insects in my yard than harmful ones. In order for the good bugs to do their job, it is important that they be welcomed in the landscape by not being exposed to pesticides, which kills the good guys along with the bad guys. Insect identification is an important step in maintaining beneficial insect populations in the landscape. By taking some time to identify an insect that is living on a plant, you can make an informed decision on whether a pesticide or other control method is even needed.

Numerous resources are available to assist you in insect identification. Master Gardeners at your local extension service are trained volunteers that provide research-based information on landscape issues, which includes insects. If an insect stumps a Master Gardener, they will work with extension agents and specialists to name it. In order to receive an accurate identification, it is recommended that a sample of the insect and the plant it is found on be submitted.

For those who are do it yourselfers, the University of Florida/IFAS bookstore has pocket size identification decks that are made up of bound waterproof cards that have a photo of the insect on one side and a description on the opposite side. Various decks are available depending on insect habitat and level of harmfulness. For information about how to purchase these wonderful resources, contact your local extension service or visit <http://www.ifasbooks.ufl.edu>.

The Internet is another resource to help identify insects, but reputable sites should be consulted. The University of Florida/IFAS launched <http://www.solutionsforyourlife.com> this year. It contains information from experts about a variety of topics, which includes lawn and garden. Not only will you be able to identify insects, you can learn about how to properly control them if necessary. Another helpful site provided by UF/IFAS is Featured Creature located at <http://creatures.ifas.ufl.edu>. In-depth profiles of insects commonly found in Florida are provided. You may search the site by various ways such as habitat.

These are just a few resources available to you so you don't have to go it alone to identify an insect. Just ask your local extension service for more information.