Caterpillars on Ornamentals

Today on Gardening in a Minute: caterpillars on ornamental plants.

Hungry caterpillars can cause a lot of damage to your precious plants. Your best defense is to scout your landscape on a regular basis. Look over your plants carefully a couple of times a week. If you see chewing damage, try to find the critter responsible—it’s probably a caterpillar.

When you find caterpillars on your plants, pluck them and squish them, or drop them in a jar of soapy water. If you have a severe infestation, you may need to spray.

Use the least toxic products available first, and look for products that contain a bacterium called bacillus thuringiensis, or BT. When young caterpillars consume the bacteria, they stop eating and die within a couple of days. These products are very specific to caterpillars and are not very harmful to people or beneficial insects.

For more information about plant pests, contact your county Extension office or visit Gardening in a Minute dot com.

Gardening in a Minute is a production of the University of Florida’s Environmental Horticulture Department, IFAS Extension, and WUFT-FM.