



Harlequin Bugs

Harlequin bugs are common summer garden visitors in Queensland. They have an attractive and distinct exoskeleton with quite a degree of variation in their markings. Their size can vary but usually they will grow to about 15mm long or a little shorter and about 8mm wide.

They are a true bug in the sense that they do suck sap from a long proboscis.

What plants do they prefer?

Harlequin bugs are happy with any soft new growth so are commonly found on

- Vegetables
- Citrus trees
- Annuals and perennials like the ones in the picture (Salvia in our garden)
- Callistemon
- Grevillea



What damage to they cause?

In severe cases they can cause stunting and deformation of new growth. When the populations build up they can be in plague proportions. Rarely will they cause damage that will threaten the life of plants although severe damage is possible. As they are sap suckers no chewing signs will be visible. The picture below shows 2 bugs sucking sap on plants not showing any real sign of stress.



Do I need to control them?

In most cases the answer is no. While they are quite good at hiding from natural predators they will normally be controlled by birds. In severe cases you can use a soap based spray (like Natrasoap) or physically remove them with a vacuum cleaner. Be aware that they will secrete a nasty pungent chemical to repel predators so avoid handling with bare hands or getting squirted in the eye.