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Bugs are present in every healthy outdoor garden. Knowing which bugs can help or hurt your plants is key to successfully managing a landscape. Supporting healthy soil, being able to identify pests, monitoring plants, supporting natural predators, and using natural pest control methods are all ways to ensure your garden remains healthy and productive. Let's dig into how best to accomplish these tasks below.



TOMATO HORNWORM. CREDITS: STOCKVAULT.NET

### **Support Your Soil**

Maintaining healthy soil is essential for growing healthy plants.

- Know your soil composition, get your soil tested: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdffiles/SS/SS18700.pdf>
- Amend as needed, with synthetic or organic products
- Increase organic matter by adding compost, composted manures, and other organic matter

### **Monitor Your Garden and Know your Pests**

Being able to identify pests and beneficial insect is important to understanding your garden's health. Spend time observing what's happening in your garden. Catching issues early is key!

- Examine plants every few days, at minimum
- Verify whether a given insect is beneficial, or a "pest"
- Contact IFAS Extension office for identification help (call, visit, email, or use the UF/IFAS website)
- Create a plan of action to address any pest issues you discover

### **Support Pests' Natural Predators**

The easiest way to control pests is to encourage the presence of their natural predators.

- Plant native plants to attract native insects, birds, and bats, who eat "pests"
- Provide a water source for natural predators
- Consider adding a bat house or bee house, if you don't have sufficient habitat
- Leave an area in the garden where pests can be tolerated- they support beneficial insects.