



Department of  
Primary Industries and  
Regional Development

# Backyard Buddies

Your monthly guide to animal and plant pests, diseases and weeds

September 2017

## On the hop



Spur-throated locust, *Austracris guttulosa* Photo credit: Gary Tate

Most people have encountered grasshoppers at some time in their gardens and watched them hop or fly away. These days we are seeing two very big native grasshoppers which have spread from their warmer northern climes and established in southern WA. They are the Giant or Hedge grasshopper (*Valanga irregularis*) and Spur-throated locust (*Austracris guttulosa*). Unfortunately both have a taste for the leaves of shrubs and trees, and this has not gone down well with gardeners.

Both species have very large bodies, approximately 50-75mm in length, with long back legs and a throat spur. Adults can live for up to 12 months. The female lays eggs in the soil in late spring. After hatching, the nymphs change colour with each moult, varying from light green to a spectacular red with blue stripes. The adult Giant grasshopper often has a

strong patterned body colour and a white stripe on the top of their thorax.



**Photo (above):** Giant grasshopper, *Valanga irregularis* Photo credit: Liz Edwards



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## Control

The word from gardeners is that chemical control is rarely effective on these chompers. Luckily there are natural control options available which only require a healthy garden environment. Grasshoppers are eaten by a wide variety of animals, particularly birds, and can be parasitised by mites, nematodes and flies. Some Scelio wasps also parasitise the eggs. In some parts of the world locusts are eaten by people - food for thought! They can also be collected by hand or net and placed in a container, then into the freezer. While not dangerous or known to bite, they're best handled with gloves to avoid the spines on their rear legs. Look

for them in the early morning as they bask in the sun in the outer foliage of plants.

You can also help protect your trees and garden by reporting unfamiliar or unusual pests, weeds or diseases to the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (previously the Department of Agriculture and Food WA). Make an online report or download the 'MyPestGuide Reporter' app from [mypestguide.agric.wa.gov.au](http://mypestguide.agric.wa.gov.au), or contact the Pest and Disease Information Service.

**Photo (below):** Nymphs of the Giant or Hedge Grasshopper, *Valanga irregularis* making a meal of citrus leaves. Photo credit: Emma (via MyPestGuide)







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Pest and Disease Information Service (PaDIS).

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