

Beneficial Species Profile



Photo credit: [Susan Ellis](#), Bugwood.org

Common Name: Ambush bugs

Scientific Name: *Phymata americana* Melin

Order and Family: Hemiptera: Reduviidae

Size and Appearance:

	Length (mm)	Appearance
Egg		Eggs are produced in masses, glued to twigs, and hatch in mid-late spring.
Larva/Nymph		Wingless and lack the markings of the winged adults.
Adult	~16mm	Broader and stouter than assassin bugs, ambush bugs also have a shorter head and lack a distinct “neck,” but do have a long beak carried back beneath the body. Ambush bugs have thickened forelegs, shaped somewhat like those of praying mantids. May be dark colored, but often creamy, or bright yellow, red, or green, with patterns that provide camouflage against the flowers on which they hide.
Pupa (if applicable)		

Type of feeder (Chewing, sucking, etc.): Piercing-sucking

Host/s: Flies, caterpillars, beetles, wasps, bees, many flying insects often larger than themselves.

Description of Benefits (predator, parasitoid, pollinator, etc.):

Ambush bugs are smaller, heavier-bodied predatory cousins to assassin bugs, but instead of stalking other insects they wait motionless for their prey to wander near. The ambush bug will suddenly seize its prey in powerful raptorial (prey-grabbing) forelegs and quickly dispatch it with a stab from its sharp

beak. Ambush bugs tend to be brightly colored, blending in with the flowers where they hide, waiting for visiting insects. There are about 300 known species, which most often overwinter as adults. Assassin bugs are poor fliers, and have also been found hunting in trees, weeds, and bushes.

References:

Newton, B. (2004). Assassin Bugs & Ambush Bugs. University of Kentucky Department of Entomology.
<http://www.uky.edu/Ag/CritterFiles/casefile/insects/bugs/assassin/assassin.htm>

Predators: Ambush Bugs (n.d.). University of Maryland.
<https://extension.umd.edu/hgic/insects/predators-ambush-bugs>