



## Class Insecta, Insects

### Order Hemiptera, True bugs

Hemiptera means “half wing” and refers to the fact that the top half of the first pair of wings is toughened and hard, while the bottom of the first pair and the second pair are membranous. Hemipterans also have piercing and sucking mouthparts; some suck plant juices and are plant pests, while others can bite. The order includes both crop and animal pests, as well as beneficial predators.

## Assassin bugs

Family Reduviidae

**Description and life history:** Assassin bugs are mostly brownish or black insects, although some are brightly colored. They are about 13 mm long, with an elongate head, a beak carried beneath their body and fitted into a groove, spines on their legs and wings that do not completely cover the abdomen. They use their sharp beak to pierce their prey, and suck juices. The nymphs resemble the adults, except they lack wings.

**Prey species:** Assassin bugs tend to creep over plants in search of caterpillars and other insects. They feed on small flying insects, medium-sized caterpillars, aphids and leafhoppers. Bugs are considered important natural enemies, but are not available commercially. They need humid microclimates, so encourage them naturally by planting cover crops and leaving grasses tall, as in naturalized landscapes.



Assassin bug on leaf. (W48)  
Photo: Whitney Cranshaw



Assassin bug adult. (335)  
Photo: unknown



*Arilus cristatus*, wheel bug adult. (336)  
Photo: unknown