

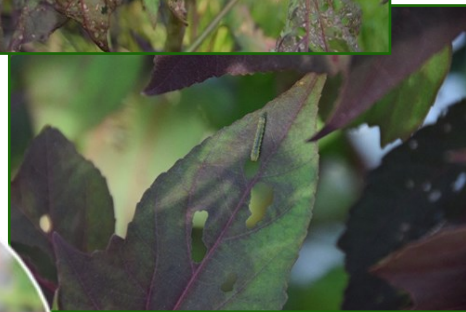


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Contributed by Rita Mhley

### RESCUING A BEAUTY!

Five new native swamp rose mallows (*Hibiscus moscheutos*) emerged late in May on the edge of my tiny rain garden. After just six weeks, they became impressive burgundy-leaved 4-foot tall structures, covered with buds and filled with promise. One day quite suddenly, I noticed inch-long green larvae eating the interiors of the tougher lower leaves, turning them to an unpleasant lace. A dose of neem oil applied to the tops and bottoms of the leaves produced no noticeable effect; the inchworms continued to munch. Next day, armed with a bowl of soapy water and plenty of patience, I started picking off and drowning the beasts, one by one. There must have been 100! I repeated the process over three successive days until I reached the lone survivor, in time for the promised rewards to appear: Dinner plate-size brilliant rose-colored flowers! Each magnificent bloom lasts just a day, but (oh, my!) how stunning! No wonder the Victorians considered the presentation of an exotic Hibiscus bloom with its ephemeral beauty the highest compliment for one's sweetheart.



The tiny Hibiscus sawfly, *Atomacera decepta*, Hymenoptera: Argidae is not a fly; rather it is in the same order as ants, wasps and bees.

