

Mind that Mantis!

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When you are out cleaning up your garden beds this spring, keep an eye out for hard, brown masses on your plants. If you find any that look like the pictures below, leave them where they are. You are lucky enough to have found a praying mantis (*Mantis religiosa*) egg case.

While you were not looking, a mantis mated in your garden. Once finished, the female oozed out white foam-like froth containing hundreds of eggs. The egg case turned brown and hard to protect the eggs inside over the winter. If you look closely, you may see narrow shafts that serve to ventilate the eggs. Remember to keep an eye on the egg case in the coming weeks and you may be lucky enough to see it hatch. As the temperature warms, the case will absorb moisture and become soft and spongy. The young will crawl down the shafts, attached to each other by silk cords and be free. By the time they become adults, they will have molted up to nine times. If your luck continues, an adult mantis may stay in your garden and feed upon ants, aphids and other garden pests.

