

## Shield bugs (*eurydema dominulus*) or Stink Bugs!!

What are they? Where are they?

They are a flattish oval, shield like bug with striking red and black markings which actually look like a painted shield (found yellow & black ones in Karen's garden). They are probably in your garden right now feasting on the plants they absolutely love - brassicas - so watch out in case they are in your cabbage patch!



There are around 6500 species in the world, and they can be found in the UK as well as here in Spain. The most common ones are green and brown, but we don't do common!!! Mainly feeding on plants however some are carnivorous and feed on pests. If touched it can stain your fingers, just like iodine. Shield bugs have two pairs of wings which fold flat over the back and when they are not in use are covered by a triangular plate called a scutellum (shield). They resemble beetles, however they have sucking mouthpieces instead of mandibles, these mouths suck the sap from the plants they are feasting upon.



They lay eggs, and when the young nymphs hatch they eat the shell, and pass through several moults before they take on the full adult characteristics. Unlike many insects, shield bugs often show parental care, guarding their young from predators.

Often called stink bugs because when disturbed they emit a cyanide like smell. The smell is emitted via glands in their thorax to repel predators. Mexicans actually eat the bugs, either alive or cooked in pates and salsas; the odour they give off gives a distinctive flavour!!

So look out for them in your garden where they can be found nearly all year round. However take a good look at the pictures as this is the *dominulus* family - there are other bugs that look very similar, especially the red & black variety but all their markings are very distinct.

