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EC69-1524 Common Vegetable Insects

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Andersen, Lloyd; Roselle, Robert E.; and Keith, David, "EC69-1524 Common Vegetable Insects" (1969). *Historical Materials from University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension*. 3953.
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COMMON VEGETABLE INSECTS

By Lloyd W. Andersen, Robert E. Roselle, David L. Keith
Agricultural Extension Entomologists

1. CABBAGE LOOPER & IMPORTED CABBAGEWORM: Both of these pests are destructive to cole crops. The feeding of the cabbage looper is often mistaken for that of the larvae of the white imported cabbage butterfly. The adult of the looper has dark brown, mottled forewings, each having a silvery spot resembling a figure "8" near its center.

2. CABBAGE APHID: The aphid is greenish, small, and covered entirely with a fine powdery white wax, giving the plants upon which it is found a whitish appearance. Both the nymphs and adults cause distortion, stunting, curling, wilting, and sometimes death to the plants by removal of plant sap. These pests secrete a sticky material called "honeydew" which provides an avenue for secondary infection of bacterial or fungus diseases.

3. TOMATO HORNWORM & TOBACCO HORNWORM: Both species feed on tomato and related solanaceous plants causing damage from mid-July to late September. When full grown the larvae are about 4 inches long. They pupate in the ground and emerge as "hawk moths," which fly at dusk. Usually there are two generations each year. Hornworms found covered with white cocoons (as pictured) have been parasitized by a small braconid wasp.

4. TWO-SPOTTED MITE: This widely distributed species is probably the most troublesome of all the plant feeding mites. It feeds on a variety of hosts including field, garden, greenhouse, nursery and ornamental plants. All instars of the pest remove plant sap, usually feeding from the undersides of the leaves. This results in speckling and bronzing of the leaf surface. Under severe infestations the entire plant may be killed. Mite damage is most likely to occur during periods of hot, dry weather.

5. BEAN LEAF BEETLE: The bean leaf beetle attacks beans, peas, soybeans and several other plants. Injury is caused by the adults devouring the leaves and stems and the larvae feeding on the roots, nodules and stems just below ground level. Adult beetles (¼ inch in length) vary in color and markings, but are usually reddish orange with black spots on their wing covers. There are two generations each year.

6. MEXICAN BEAN BEETLE: Both larvae and adult beetles feed on a variety of legumes, including field beans, soybeans, pole and lima beans. The feeding of both the adult and larvae, primarily on the underside of the leaf, results in skeletonized foliage. There are two generations a year which may sometimes overlap. Damage is more severe in the western portion of Nebraska.

7. THRIPS: Thrips can be found on several kinds of vegetables but are most likely to damage onions. The tops of infested plants, at the onset, will have whitish streaks flecked with black. Later these plants will dry up and turn white in mid-summer. Thrips are very small and move about rapidly over the plant. They are most likely to be found behind the leaf sheaths and in other concealed places.

8. ROOT MAGGOTS: Root maggots are serious pests of cabbage, cauliflower, radishes, turnips, beets and onions. Evidence of root maggot infestation is a yellowing of the lower leaves of cabbage and cauliflower. Fleshy parts of radishes and turnips become streaked with brown from tunneling. Cool moist weather favors development of this pest.

9. STRIPED CUCUMBER BEETLE: As soon as cucurbit and cruciferous crops push through the soil this beetle attacks them, feeding on the stems and cotyledons. In addition, the beetles are vectors of organisms causing mosaic and bacterial wilt. Infection by these organisms is often more severe than the damage done by feeding of the insect.

10. SPOTTED CUCUMBER BEETLE: This pest feeds extensively on all cucurbits, but is also a general feeder on many other plants. The larva of this species is known as the southern corn rootworm. Like the striped cucumber beetle, it is also a vector of bacterial wilt of cucurbits.

11. COLORADO POTATO BEETLE: The adults are stout, oval, convex beetles about 3/8 inch long, with black and yellow stripes running along the wing covers. Overwintering beetles hibernate in the soil and emerge in the spring about the time tomatoes and potatoes are pushing through the soil. Both beetles and larvae strip the plants of their foliage. There are usually two generations each year.

12. POTATO FLEA BEETLE: Two species are especially damaging to potatoes in Nebraska. The eastern-form larvae will etch the surface of the tuber; the western-form larvae will cause slivers in the tubers. There is a mixture of both forms occurring in east central Nebraska. The adults of these species eat small holes in the foliage. Other species of flea beetles are destructive to tomatoes, egg plant, radishes, corn and spinach.

13. POTATO LEAFHOPPER: This pale green insect (1/8 inch long) sucks plant juices from potato, tomato and alfalfa plants causing a condition called "tip burn" or "hopper burn." Do not confuse this with wind burn or a fertilizer deficiency in these crops.

14. SQUASH VINE BORER: Damage is caused by the larvae tunneling into the vines of squash and pumpkins, often killing the plants. They enter the stem near the ground in early summer and can be detected by the presence of sawdust-like excrement on the ground under the vines. Since the adult moth is a poor flier, infestations usually occur in areas where squash or pumpkins are grown year after year.

15. SQUASH BUG: The winged adult is grey-black and about one inch in length. Only the adult bugs live through the winter. They can be found hibernating in all kinds of protected places, both outdoors and in buildings. Both the adult and nymphs feed in colonies on squash and pumpkins. They suck out plant juices, causing the leaves to wilt, and when damage is severe the leaves become black and die.

CONTROL INFORMATION: These color illustrations are designed to help identify some of the more important common vegetable insects. University of Nebraska Entomologists prepare control leaflets that are revised each year. For the latest control leaflets, visit your local county agent, or write to the Department of Entomology, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Nebraska 68503.

EC 69-1524

Extension Service
University of Nebraska College of Agriculture and Home Economics
and U.S. Department of Agriculture Cooperating
E. F. Frolik, Dean J. L. Adams, Director

COMMON VEGETABLE INSECTS

For safe and effective use of insecticides, always identify the problem correctly.

1. Cabbage looper (light green) and imported cabbageworm (dark green)

2. Cabbage aphid. Other species damage many crops.

3. Hornworm showing cocoons of parasite on back

4. Two-spotted spider mite (enlarged). Not an insect.

5. Bean leaf beetle

6. Mexican bean beetle adult, pupa, larvae, eggs, and damage

7. Thrips (enlarged)

8. Root maggot and damage

9. Striped cucumber beetle

10. Spotted cucumber beetle

11. Colorado potato beetle larvae and adults

12. Potato flea beetle and damage

13. Potato leafhopper (greatly enlarged) and leafhopper damage

14. Squash vine borer and damage

15. Squash bug nymphs and adult

Prepared by Extension Entomologists of the North Central States in cooperation with the Federal Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture