



URI COLLEGE OF THE
ENVIRONMENT AND LIFE
SCIENCES (CELS) OUTREACH
CENTER

3 East Alumni Avenue
Kingston, Rhode Island 02881

For more information:

Call:

In RI: URI MGA Hotline
1-800-448-1011
Mon.-Thurs. 9:00 a.m.—2:00 p.m.

In MA and CT: 401-874-2900

Outside New England please
contact Cooperative Extension in
your county.

Websites:

URI Master Gardener Association
www.urimga.org

CELS Outreach Center
www.uri.edu/cels/ceo



CABBAGE LOOPER

Cabbage looper adults are nocturnal moths but they can be seen resting on the underside of host plants during the day. The moths are dark brown with small, white squiggles in the middle of their wings. The caterpillars are pale green with narrow white lines down each side. Full grown caterpillars are about 1½ inches in length.

Life Cycle

Cabbage loopers overwinter as pupae attached to host plants and other nearby objects. Adults emerge in the spring and lay on the upper surfaces of host plant leaves. Larval development may be completed in two weeks if weather is favorable and the cabbage looper can have three or more generations per year in the northern United States.

Damage

Cabbage looper larvae eat large, irregular holes in the outer leaves of cabbage plants, sometimes eating into the heads of cabbages. Heavy infestations often result in skeletonized plants, as all but the leaf veins are usually eaten.

Control

- Start checking for caterpillars in May or after seeing adult cabbageworm butterflies flying around the garden. Inspect vegetables at least once a week, checking both sides of leaves for caterpillars and their feeding damage. Focus on eliminating the smaller caterpillars. The older, larger caterpillars cause the most feeding damage.
- Crop remains should be cleaned up immediately after harvest.
- Handpicking the caterpillars can be effective; drop them into a pail of soapy water to kill them.
- Weeds such as wild mustard, peppergrass, and shepherd's purse can serve as food for cabbage loopers and should not be allowed to grow in or near gardens.
- Early planting may allow harvesting before damage becomes significant.
- *Bacillus thuringiensis*, a bacterial pathogen of caterpillars, can effectively control the cabbage looper when applied weekly as a dust.

The home gardener may also use broad spectrum pesticides such as permethrin (Eight) or carbaryl (Sevin). However, broad spectrum insecticides will also kill natural enemies that are present in the garden.

After David Gadoury, David B. Wallace, and Richard A. Casagrande (Revised 1999); University of Minnesota Extension, 2002

PESTICIDES ARE POISONOUS!! Read and follow all safety precautions on labels. Handle carefully and store in original containers out of reach of children, pets, or livestock. Dispose of empty containers immediately, in a safe manner and place. Pesticides should never be stored with foods or in areas where people eat.

When trade names are used for identification, no product endorsement is implied, nor is discrimination intended against similar materials. Be sure that the pesticide that you wish to use is registered in the state of use.

The user of this information assumes all risk for personal injury or property damage.

For more information call: URI Master Gardener Hotline (in RI) 1-800-448-1011, CELS Outreach Center (in MA and CT) 401-874-2900 or visit the URI Master Gardener Website at www.urimga.org Outside New England please contact Cooperative Extension in your county.

Rhode Island Cooperative Extension provides equal program and employment opportunities. U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating.

Note: The Hotline is open Monday—Thursday, 9:00 a.m.—2:00 p.m. from March 1 to November 1.



