



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 MAGGOT

The cabbage maggot may seriously injure cabbage, cauliflower, turnip, radish and related crucifer plants. Early-planted crucifers or seedbeds of late ones are more likely to be attacked.

Description

Cabbage maggot adults are true flies – slightly smaller than the common housefly. The flies themselves, which are gray and long-legged, are seldom seen by the home gardener. The legless larvae (maggots) are white and have a pair of black mouth hooks which curve downward for rasping. The puparium is a reddish or tan capsule resembling a grain of wheat in the soil near the plant.

Life Cycle

The adult flies emerge from the soil where they overwintered as pupae about the time the first crucifer plants are set in the garden. The pupal stage lasts 12-18 days before the adults emerge. Eggs hatch in 4 to 10 days, and in about three weeks the maggots are fully grown. There may be four generations of cabbage maggots in a season. The first occurs in late April through May, the second in late June to mid-July, the third in mid-August, and the fourth in the fall.

Damage

The young maggot begins feeding on the tender rootlets and then rasps out a channel in the main root of the plant. An early indication of attack to the cabbage plant is the plant wilting during the heat of the day. The plants may also take on a bluish cast. The plant either dies in a few days or persists in a sickly condition for some time. In cases where the plant dies quickly, there usually are a large number of maggots that riddle the root, making way for decay organisms to enter and take over quickly.

Management

The first generation is the most important to control because plants are small and very susceptible to damage. Natural predators usually provide a good degree of control later in the season. Radishes in home gardens can be grown in successive plantings, seeding at weekly intervals, and some will avoid damage. Infested radishes should be pulled and destroyed (not composted) if cabbage maggots are present.

The best control method consists of preventing the flies from laying eggs. Barri-

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.

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

ers (row covers) or netting of fine screening can be used for this purpose. In order to be effective, there must be no gaps or tears in the material, the material must be placed over the crop before or immediately upon crop emergence or transplanting, and no hosts of the pests should have been grown on that site the previous year. It is also important to bury the edges of the netting so that flies cannot get under the edges, and to allow the cover to be a little loose so the plants have room to grow. Shields constructed of tar paper, weed fabric, or old carpeting may also be used. The shields are cut into 6-inch squares or 10-inch circles with a small hole in the center; a slit is cut to the center. These are placed around the base of the transplant and pressed against the soil so that adult flies cannot crawl underneath.

No pesticides suggested for home garden use. Entomophagous nematodes may be used according to package directions. Often by the time the injury is noticed, the plants will not recover and discarding plants may be the best option.

Adapted from the Cornell Cooperative Extension, 2005