

HOW TO CONTROL CABBAGE MAGGOTS IN YOUR VEGETABLE GARDEN

The cabbage maggot, *Hylemya brassicae* (Weidemann), is a serious pest of radishes, turnips cauliflower, cabbage, and other crucifers (so called because of the four petaled flowers that resemble a cross.) The larvae feed in the stem and roots, causing stunting, wilting during the day, and in some cases death of the plants. Root crops may be riddled with holes by the time they are harvested (Figure 1). The cabbage maggot is native to Europe, but is now distributed throughout North America. It is a serious pest in western states from California to Alaska.

Description

Cabbage maggots are the larvae of a pale to dark gray fly about 1/4 inch long, with a conspicuous black stripe down the center of the abdomen. Larvae are whitish or yellowish maggots that reach a length of about 1/2 inch when mature. The body is minute, longitudinal, grooved and cylindrical. It is tapered toward the head and blunt behind. Eggs are white with minute, longitudinal grooves.

Life History

In Oregon the cabbage maggot has two to three generations a year. The flies lay their eggs in the



spring on the stems or roots just below or at the surface of the soil. These hatch in 4 to 10 days, and the tiny maggots enter the stem or roots. The larvae grow and completely hollow out the stem of the host. In about three weeks, the mature larvae leave the stems, and pupate 1 to 3 inches under the soil surface.

The adults emerge in about 2 weeks and lay eggs for 2 weeks.

The resulting larvae over-winter in the pupal stage in the soil or in plant litter. The following spring the adult flies emerge, mate, and lay eggs to resume the cycle.

Control

There has been some success using entomophagous nematodes where soils are warm, 55° F. ,or higher. Excluding the pest by covering the crops with a floating row cover and rotating crucifer crops yearly will prevent the damage.

Both insecticides and cultural practices help control cabbage maggots. Most chemical control measures rely on placing an insecticide around the plants. There the hatching maggots will come into contact with it. Timing is important as the eggs hatch soon after the flies deposit them.

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