



Four-Lined Plant Bug



Johnny N. Dell, Bugwood.org



Four-lined plant bug feeding damage Image By UConn HGEC

Feeding by the four-lined plant bug causes brown to translucent spots on young foliage of many herbaceous and woody plants. Injured leaves become distorted, curled and, if damage is severe, may fall off. Because the spots are small, somewhat circular and uniform, many gardeners think they have a disease on their plants. Also, contributing to the illusion of disease is the fact that these insects are fast moving, frequently dropping to the ground, and hiding under foliage or flying away when disturbed, so are rarely seen. A third reason people might think this is a disease is that dead plant tissue may drop out, leaving a shot hole. Many leaf spot diseases have this symptom.

Description

As the common name suggests, adults of this true bug have four black longitudinal stripes surrounded by yellow to yellow-green on the leathery part of the wing covers. Beyond this, the membranous part of the wings is black. The head and body are a golden yellow with yellow-green legs that have black markings. Antennae are black. Adults are one-quarter inch in length. Nymphs are smaller, wingless, brightly-colored yellow to red, with black spots in rows on the segments of the abdomen. Mouthparts are piercing-sucking.

Life Cycle

This insect over-winters as eggs laid in linear slits near branch tips of woody plants. Eggs hatch in late spring after most foliage has emerged. The nymphs feed on the upper sides of leaves, withdrawing chlorophyll with their piercing-sucking mouthparts. Approximately 30 days and five molts later, the adults appear. Adults feed for about a month, then mate and the female lays eggs. There is only one generation each year.

Hosts

The four-lined plant bug feeds on many annuals, perennials, trees and shrubs, and vegetables. Azalea, dogwood, forsythia, honeysuckle, hydrangea, viburnum and weigela are some of the more common shrubs attacked. Shasta daisy, coreopsis, dahlia, morning glory, lavender, lupine, geranium and zinnia are some annuals and perennials that are attacked. Vegetables, small fruits and some herbs, such as basil and mints, also serve as hosts.

Management Methods

On ornamentals and leafy vegetables, where tolerance for injury is low, monitoring should begin mid-spring. At the first sign of injury, control measures should be taken. These insects are heavy feeders, and a few can cause much discoloration, so it's best to treat early.

Least toxic methods of control for ornamentals and edibles would include insecticidal soap and summer weight horticultural oils and where feasible, removal of egg masses by selective pruning. Egg-laying sites are easily visible after leaves drop in autumn.

Despite good cultural practices, pests and diseases at times may appear. Chemical control should be used only after all other methods have failed.

For pesticide information please call UConn Home and Garden Education Center weekdays, in Connecticut call toll free 877-486-6271. Out of state call 860-486-6271.

References

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