

Problem: Imported Cabbageworm - *Pieris rapae*



Hosts: Cabbage, Broccoli, Cauliflower

Description: This is the worm often seen with the cabbage looper on crucifers. The larva is a velvety green caterpillar that feeds on the leaves when the larva is young. This insect crawls flat rather than using a "looping" motion as the cabbage looper does. As the larva matures, it may start feeding on cabbage, broccoli, or cauliflower heads. Mature larvae are about 1 1/4 inches long. Larvae take about 10 days to 2 weeks to mature and attach themselves to the leaves of the host plants with a silken thread when they are ready to pupate. The chrysalis is a light green color.

The adult of this insect is a white butterfly with black spots on the wings and can be seen in the garden from spring to fall. Eggs are laid singly on the underside of the leaves and are a yellow to cream color. They are spherical in shape rather than the missile shape found with cabbage looper eggs.

Recommendations Early control is essential to reduce injury. BT (*Bacillus thuringiensis*) and spinosad (Captain Jack's Dead Bug Brew, Monterey Garden Insect Spray, Natural Guard Spinosad) are effective organic products that are labeled for this pest. BT can be found in Dipel, Thuricide and other similar materials. Direct sunlight deactivates BT quickly so it is helpful to spray late in the day or on a cloudy day. Conventional insecticides such as carbaryl (Sevin Dust), malathion and methoxychlor are also effective but will kill natural enemies of these pests. Be sure to hit the underside of leaves where insects feed. Note that hitting the underside of leaves is easier when using a dust applied with a duster than when using a liquid spray.

References:

1. [Imported Cabbageworm](#), Insect Diagnostic Library, Cornell University Extension Publication
2. [Caterpillar Pests of Cole Crops in Home Gardens](#), University of Minnesota Extension

Last Update: 1/7/2020

Brand names appearing in this publication are for product identification purposes only. No endorsement is intended, nor is criticism implied of similar products not mentioned.

“Knowledge for Life”

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service