



Fact sheet

Insect Pests of the Home Garden Series

Harlequin Bug

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Adult



Eggs (B. Newton, UK)



Nymph (B. Newton, UK)



Damaged cabbage leaf.



Damaged horseradish leaf.

Injury:

Harlequin bugs, *Murgantia histrionica* (Hahn), are often present in Ocean, Atlantic, and Cape May Counties, but are occasionally found in other areas of southern New Jersey. Adults and nymphs pierce stalks, leaves, and veins with needle-like mouth parts and extract plant juices from cabbage, cauliflower, collards, mustard, Brussels sprouts, turnip, kale, kohlrabi, radish and horseradish. If infestations are heavy, harlequin bugs may also feed on asparagus, bean, beet, corn, eggplant, lettuce, okra, potato, squash and tomato. Damaged plants develop irregular cloudy spots around the puncture wound. Young plants may wilt, turn brown, and eventually die while older plants become stunted or deformed.

Description:

Adult bugs are 3/8-inch long and mottled red, black, and yellow or orange. Eggs are cylindrical (barrel shaped), yellow to light gray with black bands, about 1/30 inch long, and resemble small kegs with black hoops. Young nymphs are green with black marks, and older nymphs are similar to black and orange adult coloration but are slightly smaller and lack wings. All stages emit a disagreeable odor when disturbed.

Life History:

Winter is passed as an adult among plant debris and rubbish. In spring, adults congregate on any cole



crops available. Females usually lay eggs in double clusters of 10–12 on the undersides of leaves, until the female has deposited a total of about 150 eggs. Eggs hatch in 4–11 days, depending on weather and temperature. Nymphs feed for about 5–6 weeks, and pass through 5 instars over the next 2 months before becoming adults. There are 2 generations annually.

Management of Harlequin Bugs:

1. Overwintering adults can be destroyed by plowing under crop residue and field debris after the onset of cold weather.
2. Destruction of weeds and crucifer-related plants within the garden and nearby bordering areas limits overwintering sites.
3. Hand picking of bugs is an effective method of eliminating this pest, although the bug's odors may be repulsive to some gardeners. Be sure to wear disposable gloves.
4. Several varieties of various crops have some resistance or tolerance to Harlequin bugs. Consult your local seed supplier for specific varieties.
5. If insecticides are used, apply when bugs first appear and repeat as necessary. Read and follow all label directions, restrictions and precautionary statements. Days to harvest after last application vary depending on crop and pesticide—refer to label for appropriate time intervals.

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