

Vegetable Pest Alert

May 5, 2023

Cabbage Root Maggot. Be on the lookout for cabbage root maggot. It is a pest of all types of brassicas, but is particularly damaging in cabbage, broccoli, Chinese cabbage, radish, turnips, and rutabaga.

Flies overwinter as pupae near roots of fall brassica crops and weeds. A good indicator of the first peak flight (50% emergence) is blooming of the yellow rocket (aka winter cress) which is at about 450 GDD (base 40°F).



Cabbage maggot eggs are white, elongated, just over 1 mm long, and are laid in soil at the base of plants (left); Cabbage maggot flies are the larger of the two pictured here (Photos: S. B. Scheufele, UMass Extension Vegetable Program)

Scout transplant trays before setting out plants in the field. A pencil is a good tool to gently stir the soil at the base of the plant and look for eggs. Yellow sticky cards placed near brassicas capture adult flies. In the field, finding an average of 1 egg per plant can indicate a damaging population. Damage includes wilting, leaf discoloration, and plant death in leafy and heading crops and tunneling in root crops.

Row covers will protect the crops from cabbage maggots, flea beetles, and many other pests as long as the pests are not emerging from the same location. So, crop rotation is important. Soil drenches of Coragen, Verimark, Radiant, or Entrust can control the cabbage root maggot if applied when eggs are first seen at the base of plants. Research done in Cornell University in 2022 found Verimark applied as a tray drench resulted in excellent control, but directed sprays at the base of the plant were the least effective. Verimark application as a soil drench also controls

brassica flea beetles. Once larvae have been feeding in roots for several weeks, chemical control is difficult. See [New England Vegetable Management Guide](#) for pesticide options and restrictions in the application.

[A short video](#): Thanks to farmer Rodger Phillips for sharing his experience of using electric fencing for deer control.

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