

FLEA BEETLES

By Eric Day and Alexandra Spring

DESCRIPTION: Many species. Black, brown, or striped beetles; about 1/16 inch long. Active, hops away when disturbed



Fig. 1: left: palestriped flea beetle (*Frank Peairs, Colorado State University, Bugwood.org*); center: tobacco flea beetle (*R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company Slide Set, R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company, Bugwood.org*), right: a flea beetle (*Alton N. Sparks, Jr., University of Georgia, Bugwood.org*)

COMMON HOST PLANT(S): Tomato, pepper, cabbage and related crops, eggplant, beet, spinach, turnip, mustard and radish.

DAMAGE: Young plants, especially transplants, are severely damaged. Adults and larvae chew many tiny holes in leaves.

DISTRIBUTION: Throughout United States.

LIFECYCLE: Adults overwinter in soil; in early spring they begin feeding on crop foliage. Females deposit eggs near the soil line where larvae emerge in about a week and feed on roots. Larvae feed for two to three weeks until reaching maturity and then pupate, emerging from the soil as adults in about two weeks.

CULTURAL CONTROL: Plow under weed and crop debris in the fall after harvest.

ORGANIC/BIOLOGICAL CONTROL: Dust with diatomaceous earth or rotenone for serious infestations.

CHEMICAL CONTROL: Treat with a registered insecticide when insects appear in damaging numbers. Repeat as needed. Follow all label instructions, precautions, and pre-harvest intervals. **FOR SWEET CORN: CAUTION:** Application of Carbaryl to tassel region of corn during the pollen shedding period will seriously reduce the bee population.

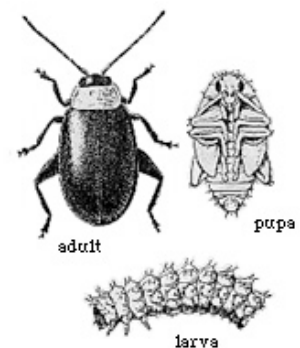


Fig. 2: Life stages of the Flea Beetle