

ONION THRIPS

By Eric Day and Alexandra Spring

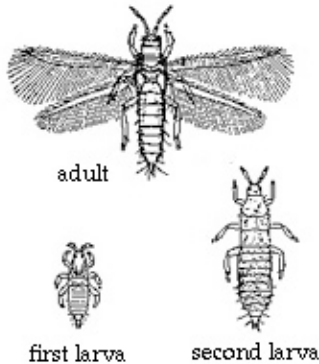


Fig. 1: Life stages of Onion Thrips

DESCRIPTION: Adult: Yellow or brownish, winged, active, about 1/25 inch long. Larva: White, wingless, looks like adult but smaller.

COMMON HOST PLANT(S): Onion. Also, bean, beet, carrot, cabbage, cauliflower, celery, cucumber, melons, peas, squash, tomato and turnip.

DAMAGE: Adults and larvae suck out juices from plants. White blotches appear on leaves. Tips of leaves wither and turn brown.

DISTRIBUTION: Throughout United States.

LIFECYCLE: Onion thrips overwinter as adults and immature nymphs in plant debris in or near fields. Onion thrips deposit their eggs in leaf tissue. Onion thrips experience four instars. The first two instars feed on the onion plant. Following these two immature stages a pre-pupal, non-feeding, but mobile stage occurs at the soil line around bases of plants or in leaf axils. The time span from egg to adult can occur in 3-4 weeks. Multiple, overlapping generations occur annually in Virginia.

CULTURAL CONTROL: Some varieties of sweet onion are resistant to thrips.

ORGANIC/BIOLOGICAL CONTROL: Apply a dust of diatomaceous earth to control thrips. Minute pirate bugs and some lady beetle are predators of thrips.

CHEMICAL CONTROL: Treat with a registered insecticide when thrips appear in damaging numbers.

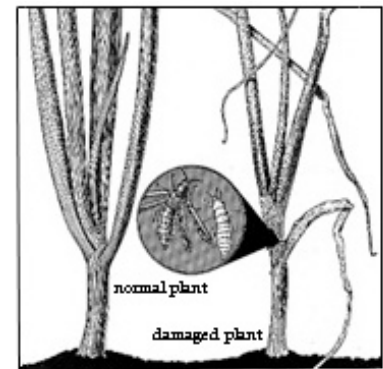


Fig. 2: Comparison of plant health; one with and one without onion thrips