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Strawberry: Cutworms and armyworms

Use Integrated Pest Management (IPM) for successful plant problem management.

Biology

Cutworms and armyworms are the larvae of noctuid moths. These common moths are medium-sized with fairly dull coloration. The greenish, grayish, or tan caterpillars are hairless, nocturnal, and generally spotted, striped, or otherwise marked. They may be 1/4" to 1" in length and tend to curl up when disturbed. They may climb into the plant and feed on foliage, buds, flowers, or fruit. Armyworm behavior is similar to that of cutworms, but armyworms feed in large groups instead of individually. They tend to be voracious feeders. The caterpillars typically spend the day just beneath the soil surface or under debris near the host. Weeds are a primary food source for both cutworms and armyworms.

Management Options

Non-Chemical Management

- ~ Control weeds and grasses in and near the garden.
- ~ Remove debris around plants that provides shelter for cutworms.
- ~ Hand-pick night-feeding larvae, when practical. Scratch soil at the base of damaged plants to find larvae in the daytime.
- ~ Encourage natural enemies of caterpillars including birds, spiders, and predacious insects. Avoid use of broad-spectrum insecticides that kill beneficial insects.

Select non-chemical management options as your first choice!

Chemical Management

IMPORTANT: Visit Home and Garden Fact Sheets for more information on using pesticides

Apply when pests are present. *Bacillus thuringiensis* will provide some control if caterpillars eat enough of it. Use a spreader-sticker with liquid Bt formulations.

Listed below are examples of pesticides that are legal in Washington. Always read and follow all label directions.

- ~ Bonide Captain Jack's Deadbug Brew R-T-U [Organic]
 - active ingredient: *spinosad* (*spinosyn A+D*)
 - EPA reg no: 4-472
- ~ Bonide Thuricide BT Conc
 - active ingredient: *Bacillus thuringiensis subsp. kurstaki*
 - EPA reg no: 4-226
- ~ Safer Brand Garden Dust RTU [Organic]
 - active ingredient: *Bacillus thuringiensis subsp. kurstaki*
 - EPA reg no: 36488-25-42697
- ~ This list may not include all products registered for this use.

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Images



~ Caption: *Western yellow stripe armyworm*
~ Photo by: *Unknown*



~ Caption: *Bertha armyworm*
~ Photo by: *K. Grey*



~ Caption: *Cutworm eggs*
~ Photo by: *A.L. Antonelli*



~ Caption: *Western yellow stripe armyworm adult*
~ Photo by: *A.L. Antonelli*