

May 18, 2019

PEST ALERTS: **Leafminers** on beets and chard are in full swing— best stage to control is eggs; **Brassica Flea beetles** are busy on uncovered (and even sometimes covered) brassicas, especially bok choy, Chinese cabbage, arugula and turnips. They can be controlled with knockdown insecticide. Minimize the number of applications. Damage caused by **cabbage root maggot** is now being seen on cabbage, kale and other brassicas. Early season plants rarely recover, while larger plants attacked by the summer generation can handle a few feeding larvae. **White grubs** are feeding on roots of lettuce, beets, chard and spinach. If you see plants failing to thrive, pull them out and check roots. Unfortunately, there is no vegetable label (yet) for *Bacillus thuringiensis* var *Galleriae*, which is very effective for control of grubs in lawns. One greenhouse in RI had **downy mildew** (yes, you read right) all over their **Basil**. We can only assume that this was brought in on the seed of one of the varieties, and weather conditions in greenhouses have been good for it to thrive. Other “weird” disorders continue in greenhouses, but this shall end soon as plants are moved outside and the weather begins to turn. Be careful with excessive sun and wind on tender transplants. Expect emergence of the first flight of **European corn borers** by the end of May/first week of June. And they don’t just lay eggs on pepper plants and beans: they can take out substantial numbers of **Dahlia** stalks as well. Too early to scout for eggs, though. Finally— ANTS have been seen eating Broccoli roots and stems again. They sometimes do this. Go figyah.

--> **Need to discuss? Got something you need looked at? URI Extension: 401-874-2967/andy_radin@uri.edu, hfaubert@uri.edu**

Living mulch between plastic mulched beds



Oats are doing well in these alley ways between black plastic mulch at Garman Farm. We all would love to see thick growth of a weed-suppressing living mulch. It’s never quite so easy as the pictures in our imaginations. As annuals begin to grow through, mowing is essential. The oats are getting a great jump on the annuals given the cool wet spring. A level soil surface helps for mowing. Biggest challenge is at the edge of the plastic, where plastic can get ripped by a cultivator. Air drainage is important at the edge for avoiding disease.

Show off on these pages...

You are cordially invited to share your reports from the field, whether they are detailed play-by-play descriptions (may be edited for brevity) or photos of your prize-winning rhubarb... or your suffering eggplants. Or in the case right here, tomato seedlings suffering from desiccation (never knew this had to c's) on the left, and cutworm damage on the right. Note the clipped leaf material on the soil surface. Cutworms (Family Noctuidae) live in vertical burrows and either drag the foliage they clipped right down under, or leave it on the surface and feed from beneath. After fresh damage, gently dig around the base of plants— you may get lucky and find the fat little bugger. Thanks Matt!



Report from Middletown

Well, that was an unpleasant week, but maybe we've finally turned the corner. Prior to Wednesday it had been relentlessly cold, wet, and damp; plants have just seemed to sit there waiting for a little sun and warmth. Our Growing Degree Days (base 50 F) are at 73.5, and the last five days have seen a soil temperature average of 50.8 F.

Flea beetles emerged here last week the minute we had a solid 50-degree day. They are on every Brassica weed at the edge of the field. Crummy weather

has allowed us to mow down those edges to take down their habitat. We have also seen blister beetles here and there. They're not rated as a serious pest, but they sure love chard, so all our chard stays under row cover. We have had luck controlling them with spinosad, even the low-dose Monterey. No obvious onion pests yet, but we continue to scout. Hope everyone's hanging in there, and that warmer days are just ahead!

We did end up with a few flea beetles under the row covers and get on our bok choy. Minor damage, low

population, we gave them a little Pyrethrum to ponder. Scouted all the beds near the bok choy and saw a few more - but they were bouncing around on the aimlessly on the plastic mulch and not feeding on the plants. Michelle noted that they weren't shiny, they had a matte finish and that they were smaller and blockier than their bok choi-eating buddies. Yet when you touched them, they jumped like flea beetles. Best guess (is that they were potato flea beetles wandering the wrong neighborhood. So strange to see what we knew was a flea beetle not devouring plants. [Editors note: Most likely, these are **Garden Springtails**. They make circular feeding gouges without eating through the leaf. They do very little damage. They are pretty common on early spinach in the field.]

And from Portsmouth...

Jeffrey Reise let us know what's happening on the northern tip of the island:

Like most everybody my outside fields are cold and wet. My main growing area is on a slope with the lower areas being either very wet or having standing water. You would not want to drive a tractor in. I also have a fairly heavy soil that will compact hard. In the drier days of last weekend, I tilled an area in the drier part and planted several kinds of peas, spinach, greens and radishes. Then it got cold and wet and nothing has come up. Its been too wet to plant more. Hopefully this weekend.

My fruit trees and flowering; ornamental ones that can stand the rain are remaining in the flowering stage. I've seen very few bees. Essentially no honey bees, a moderate amount of bumble bees, and a few small bees, probably Mason bees. Last year I didn't see many bees, but there was fruit so I guess other insects are doing the pollinating. The retention of flowers longer than normal suggest to me that the cool, wet weather is impeding polination. We are picking asparagus and rhubarb. My strawberry patch needs renewing, but what's there has a lot of flowers and will probably start to ripen around the end of May.

The last three springs have been cool and wet through roughly May 20th, then without much of a transition it got fairly hot and after the first week in June dry for an extended period. The transition from too cold and wet to plant (without the seed rotting) makes growing things like the cool weather crops of peas, radishes, greens, spinach and others hard to do. When I first started growing in the early 1960's I put in beans, squash, and the more hardy varieties of corn (Jonnycake corn), I wouldn't try it under these conditions. Will we have a repeat of last year's transition and summer? Our frost was about two weeks earlier than most of the other years, although it was closer to the published long term seasonal norms. It will be a late start for most of my produce. I suspect that is true for others without protected growing conditions and better drained land.

Basil downy mildew.

Sadly, quite a few flats had to be destroyed. This probably happened because of contaminated seed. It's worth it to follow up with the seed company when this happens. You could be helping a lot of other growers out, and yourself as well.

