

Garden Fleahoppers

Introduction

Garden fleahoppers (*Halticus bractatus*) are a native insect and one of the smallest plant bugs.

Identification

Garden fleahoppers are small (1/10 inch long), shiny black insects with long legs and antennae. They have an expanded hind leg segment (femora) enabling them to jump or hop when disturbed. Garden fleahoppers resemble flea beetles except that their antennae are as long as their body whereas flea beetles have much shorter antennae that are less than half the length of their body. The immature garden fleahopper nymphs are pale green, turning darker as they age. The target audience of this fact sheet is commercial greenhouse growers.



Figures 1 & 2: Garden fleahopper adults (on left) and immature nymph that resembles a small aphid (on right). Photos by L. Pundt

Feeding Damage

The garden fleahopper has a broad host range feeding upon many different herbaceous annuals and perennials, garden vegetables, and weeds. Some ornamental plants reported as hosts include chrysanthemum, *Helenium*, *Helianthus*, *Phlox*, *Rudbeckia*, *Scabiosa*, *Salvia*, verbena, and zinnia. As this sucking insect feeds, pale whitish spots or speckles develop on the leaves resembling two-spotted spider mite or lace bug.



Figures 3 & 4: Garden fleahopper feeding damage to Montauk daisy (on left) and Salvia (on right). Photos by L. Pundt

Biology and Life Cycle

Garden fleahoppers overwinter as eggs inserted into plant stems. Eggs hatch into nymphs that mature into adults. There may be 3 to 4 generations a year.

Management

Garden fleahoppers may build up in nearby weeds, so practicing good weed management around production areas is important. Garden fleahoppers are also easily suppressed by applications of labeled insecticides.

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References

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