

UConn | EXTENSION

Vegetable Pest Alert

Updates and Scouting Reports from the Field

May 2, 2025

What to be on the lookout for...

Brassica Flea Beetles

Adults spend the winter in the shrubby or woody borders around the field, specifically in the soil surface and decaying plant residue. Around early May they will start to search out host crops and begin feeding on their leaves and stems, leaving behind small round pits and holes. Eggs are laid in the soil near the plants. Larvae feed on root hairs and pupate underground.



*Brassica flea beetle damage on exposed crop without row cover (left) and with row cover (right).
Photo: Shuresh Ghimire*

Crops with waxier leaves (*Brassica oleracea* such as cabbage, broccoli, and kale) are less attractive to flea beetles and feeding is more restricted to leaf margins, especially as the crop matures. Crops with glossy leaves (*B. rapa* such as bok choy, Napa cabbage, or *B. juncea* such as mustard) are highly attractive to flea beetles. These crops are susceptible to flea beetle damage from planting to harvest.

Deter peak adult activity and avoid the buildup of high populations by rotating spring crops as far as possible from last season's fall brassica crops. It is also recommended that late-season brassica are planted far from early brassicas. Use attractive brassica types (*B. rapa* or *B. juncea*) on borders or within the field as a trap crop to draw beetles from less attractive types. Spray the trap crop to suppress beetles in the whole field, and to protect the trap crop for harvest.

Monitoring & Thresholds

Scout across the field by counting beetles from above, then under the leaves, and estimating the percent of leaf damage. Because brassica crops differ greatly in susceptibility and attractiveness there is no fixed economic threshold that applies to all crops and crop stages. A working threshold of 1 beetle per plant or >10% average leaf damage on 50% of the plants has proved effective in leafy greens and early stages of heading brassicas. Repeated applications may be needed if pressure is high.

Cultural Controls & Prevention

- Rotate spring crops as far as possible from last season's fall brassica crops
- [Row covers](#) provide great protection!
- Control brassica weeds
- Incorporate and till the crops immediately after harvest to kill larvae feeding on roots
- Several synthetic pyrethroids, carbamates, neonicotinoids, and diamides are labeled for flea beetles in brassicas.
- See the [New England Vegetable Management Guide](#) website for more information on insect controls for brassica crops.



Adult brassica flea beetle, uniformly black and shiny. Photo: UMass Extension

White Grub

The white grub is a larva of a scarab beetle. Identifiable from their C-shaped body, brown head, and three pairs of legs, white grubs are root feeders, damaging the plant's ability take up nutrients and moisture from the soil.

In late fall, grubs migrate downward through the soil profile, staying below the frost line throughout the winter. In the spring as the soils warm up, the grubs move back into the root zone and resume feeding. By the middle of June, most grubs have completed their feeding requirements and pupate (still in the soil) for about a week before emerging as new young adults.



Three species of the common pest "white grub". Left to right are Japanese beetle, European chafer, and June bug. Photo: David Cappaert, Bugwood.org

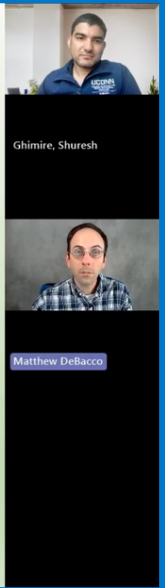
The [New England Vegetable Management Guide](#) lists products for this pest in asparagus, basil, okra, and sweet corn. For controls in other crops, check the label of commonly used broad spectrum synthetic pyrethroids carbamates, and neonicotinoids. Organic options include entomopathogenic fungus such as *Isaria fumosorosea* Apopka Strain 97 and beneficial nematodes such as *Steinernema* and *Heterorhabditis* species.

Newly Recorded Presentation: Early Season Vegetable Pest Management

As we head into the growing season, it's important for vegetable producers to stay ahead of early-season pest pressures. In this presentation, Matt DeBacco sits down with Shuresh Ghimire to discuss key early-season insect pests and practical tips for scouting and cultural management. They explore common signs growers often overlook, effective strategies for rotating insecticides, and biological control options that work well early in the season. The conversation also covers critical decisions after transplanting and highlights go-to scouting guides to support timely, informed pest management.

Topics for Today's Discussion

1. Early-season pests should tomato and cucurbit growers be keeping an eye out for this year?
2. New Changes to Pesticide Labels for 2025
3. Plant Scouting Tips
4. Key Signs Growers Often Miss
5. Cultural Practices to Help Keep Early-Season Pests in Check?
6. Advice When it Comes to Rotating Insecticides?
7. Biological Control Options that Work Well Early in the Season?
8. Key Decisions After Transplanting to Stay Ahead of Pests?
9. Go-to Tools, Scouting Guides, or Threshold Charts that you Recommend?



Useful links:

- Click here to [watch the video](#) on the UConn Extension YouTube page.
- Click here to [download the slides](#) to the presentation

Continue to be on the lookout for the following pests

- [Allium Leafminer](#)
- [Aphids](#)
- [Asparagus Beetles](#)
- [Cabbage Root Maggot](#)
- [Corn Earworm](#)
- [European Corn Borer](#)

Support for Monitoring Sweet Corn and Squash Pests

The UConn Extension Vegetable IPM Team has have funds available to purchase traps and lures. If you are interested in working with us for more robust pest monitoring, please send us an email with the acres of sweet corn and/or squash you plan to grow this year and your town.

Email Shuresh Ghimire,
shuresh.ghimire@uconn.edu



Field Walk at Stone Acres Farm

Date: May 27th, 4 to 6 pm (optional pizza dinner, 6-7 pm)

Location: Stone Acres Farm, 393 North Main St, Stonington, CT 06378

Join American Farmland Trust for a field walk from 4-6pm on Tuesday, May 27th to discuss reduced tillage experiments at Stone Acres Farm in Stonington, CT. Stone Acres Farm is a 63-acre working vegetable and flower farm that celebrates natural farming, sustainable food, culinary education and the preservation of open space, cultural landscapes, and historic structures.

Farm Manager Pete Higgins will walk us through the farm's transition to reduced tillage strategies, including tarping and strip tillage into cover crops. We will look at peas which were planted without tillage and also compare a side-by-side trial of tomatoes and cucumbers planted into strip-tilled cover crops versus the same crops planted onto bare ground. Pete will show us the equipment they have used for these experiments and the challenges they've faced.

This field walk will leave plenty of time for discussion and we hope other farmers will share their challenges and successes! After the field walk, there will be dinner provided that includes produce from the farm. Please register below so we have plenty of food. Questions? contact Julie Fine at jfine@farmland.org or 413-531-0425

Registration Link: [Field Walk at Stone Acre Farm in Stonington, CT](#)

New England Soil Health Survey

Get free soil health testing on your farm by participating in AFT's New England Soil Health Survey! Free soil testing is available through this new program from AFT New England and the [USDA ARS Food Systems Research Unit](#). Farms in Vermont, New Hampshire, Connecticut and Massachusetts are eligible to receive free soil health testing on up to three fields after completing a short survey.

Learn more at: <https://farmland.org/new-england-soil-health-survey/>

Stay in touch with us!

- **Share what you see:** If you've identified a pest or disease in your field, we're interested to hear from you. We track information from vegetable farmers throughout the state all season long. We're also here to assist with identification, management strategies, and guidance on best practices. Send us a photo/message via text at 959-929-1031.
- **Facebook Group:** UConn Extension moderates a private Facebook group specifically for commercial vegetable producers. It is a space to share photos of insects and diseases you find in your fields, ask questions, share ideas, and stay engaged with growers across the state. **Click here to join:** "[UConn Extension – Vegetable IPM](#)"
- **Schedule a Consultation:** Is there something in your vegetable fields or high tunnels that is giving you reason for pause? Would you benefit from meeting with an Extension Specialist to provide insight on pest or disease identification, management strategies, and more? If so, please contact our Vegetable Extension Specialist, Shuresh Ghimire, to set up a farm visit. You can email him at shuresh.ghimire@uconn.edu or call the office at 860-870-6933.

The Vegetable IPM Pest Alert Phonenumber: 860-870-6954

The Vegetable IPM Pest Alert Phonenumber offers a convenient alternative for folks who prefer an audio version of our weekly message, updated every Friday. Please save and share this number with local growers that would benefit from listening to phone recordings of our pest alert messages. Listen in at 860-870-6954.

Thank you for reading!

This report was prepared by Nicole Davidow, Outreach Coordinator, and Shuresh Ghimire, Commercial Vegetable Specialist, UConn Extension.

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Vegetable IPM Pest Alert Audio Recording: 860-870-6954

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