UCONN EXTENSION Vegetable Pest Alert

Updates and Scouting Reports from the Field

May 9, 2025

What to be on the lookout for...

Aphids on Tomatoes in Greenhouses and High Tunnels

Tomatoes are commonly seen growing inside hoop houses, high tunnels, and greenhouses throughout Connecticut due to their high value and ability to utilize vertical growing space. The structures often provide ideal conditions for stable, early growth for the plants, and if not careful, an environment for some key pests as well.

Scouting and preventative, timely releases of biological controls can be effective in managing aphids in greenhouse and high tunnel tomatoes. Additional signs of aphid activity include shed white skins, shiny honeydew, curled new leaves, distorted growth and the presence of ants.



Pictured left: Small, 1/16 inch long, round, soft bodied aphids, feeding on the new terminal growth. Photo: L. Pundt, UConn. Pictured right: Aphid colony on the underside of a tomato leaf (note white skins shed by adult aphids). Photo: S. Ghimire., UConn.

Preventative Strategies for Aphid Management Include:

- Start clean and inspect incoming plant material; spot treat if necessary.
- Practice good sanitation, such as removing discarded plant material and eliminating weeds around plant production areas. Weed hosts often serve as sources for migrating or ant-carried aphids.
- Avoid excessive nitrogen applications. Nitrogen promotes soft plant tissue, and soft plant tissue promotes higher aphid populations.
- Monitor early and start treatment without delay.

Aphids can also be a significant pest in field-grown tomatoes. Scout weekly across the field, sampling 3 leaves per plant at lower, mid, and upper levels. Count aphid adults and nymphs and note if numbers are increasing. Treat when aphids exceed 6 per leaf. Beneficial insects generally (NOT always) keep aphids under control in tomato crops, unless broad spectrum insecticides are used for other pests. DO NOT use emulsifiable concentrates on tomatoes setting young fruit, or injury may occur.

See the New England Vegetable Management Guide on <u>Greenhouse & High Tunnel</u> <u>Tomato Insect Control for more information</u>.

Additional Resources:

<u>Biological Pest Control Success in Greenhouse Tomatoes</u> - Updated by UConn Extension <u>Aphids on Greenhouse Crops</u> - UMass Extension <u>Managing Aphids in the Greenhouse</u> - UConn Extension

Onion Thrips

Onion thrips have been seen in low numbers so far. This is partially due to the fact that they favor hot, dry weather, and heavy rain like we've had recently can significantly lower populations.

Adults overwinter in crop remnants, alfalfa, wheat, greenhouses, and weeds along the border of crop fields. They lay eggs singly in the plant epidermis, nymphs feed on leaves, and pupation occurs in the soil. Scout plants along field margins where infestations build early, as well as checking across the field. Look closely between leaf blades to find the light-yellow nymphs or darker adults.

Damage may appear as silver lines, white patches, tip dieback, curling and twisting of leaves, slowed growth, reduced bulb size and yields, or if severe enough, can result in plant death. Begin applications when damage is first noticed or when there are 3 or more thrips per leaf.



Thrips nymphs on onlion leaves. Photo: <u>UMass Extension</u>

The most effective material for organic growers is spinosad (e.g. Entrust) applied with insecticidal soap (e.g. M-Pede) to increase efficacy. Entrust can be used two times in a row before rotating to a different insecticide class. Neem oil (e.g. Trilogy) and azadirachtin (e.g. Azatin O) may be effective also if applied when poplations are still low. Pyrethrin (e.g. Pyganic) can provide knockdown control.

See <u>https://nevegetable.org/crops/onion-scallion-and-shallot/insect-control</u> for more spray options.

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 Gowers 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

- <u>Allium Leafminer</u>
- <u>Aphids</u>
- <u>Asparagus Beetles</u>
- Brassica Flea Beetles
- <u>Cabbage Root Maggot</u>
- White Grubs
- <u>Corn Earworm</u>
- <u>European Corn Borer</u>

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



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 <u>USDA ARS Food Systems Research Unit</u>. Farms in Vermont, New Hampshire, Connecticut and Massachusetts are eligible to receive free soil health testing on up to three fiels after completing a short survey.

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

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 Phoneline: 860-870-6954

The Vegetable IPM Pest Alert Phoneline 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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