

Red pumpkin beetle

Recognize the problem

The adult is almost rectangular, shiny and orangey red. Its eggs are yellow and can be seen on the soil at the base of the plant. The fully grown young grub is white and legless. The pupa is found enclosed within a waterproof cocoon in the soil. Adult beetles feed voraciously on leaves, making irregular holes in the leaf lamina. The red pumpkin beetle (RPB) prefers to feed on young leaves (cotyledon stage) and so sometimes, it becomes very difficult to raise seedlings. The adult insect also feeds on the leaves of fully grown plants by scraping off the chlorophyll and giving the leaves a net-like appearance. The attacked plants may wither away, making it necessary to re-sow the crop. The larvae also cause damage by feeding on leaves and fruits in contact with the soil and by boring into the roots and stem underground. These damaged roots and stems may rot due to infection by saprophytic fungi. Young and small fruits of the infested creepers may dry up, while the bigger and mature fruits become unfit for human consumption.

Red pumpkin beetle. (Photo by NBAIR)



Background

RPB is a serious pest of cucurbitaceous plants, except bitter melon, which is favoured by the Epilachna beetle. The maximum damage is done when the crop is in the cotyledon stage. The first generation of beetles is therefore more injurious than the subsequent generations.

Management

- Always keep the field clean
- Sow early so that the plant passes the cotyledon stage by the time the beetles become active
- Seedlings can be saved by covering with a mosquito net
- Apply dry ash to the plants.
- Keep the field free of alternate host weeds, such as other cucurbits
- Collect adult insects from the infested leaves and kill them
- Deep ploughing of soil is recommended to expose the soil borne pests and hibernating stage of defoliators during the summer
- Using neem oil cake in the soil has been reported to kill the pest larvae
- The pest can be killed by spraying fenitrothion (e.g. Sumithion) or malathion 50EC @ 500 ml/hectare. The treatment should be applied as soon as the pest appears and repeated at 15 days interval.

When using a pesticide, always wear protective clothing and follow the instructions on the product label, such as dosage, timing of application, and pre-harvest interval.

Scientific name(s) > *Aulacophora foveicollis*

The recommendations in this factsheet are relevant to: Bangladesh



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