

# URBAN AGRICULTURE INFORMATION PESTS AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT THEM

## PEST: THRIPS



Onion thrips (top) Western flower thrips (adults)



Onion thrips larva



Thrips damage is often accompanied by black flecks of frass

## CROPS AFFECTED

- Cabbage
- Lettuce
- Peppers
- Tomatoes
- Cucumbers
- Onion
- Spinach

## DAMAGE

- Damaged leaves become papery, distorted, and develop tiny pale spots.
- Small, black feces may be present.
- Purple blotch can develop due to the fungus entering through feeding wounds.
- Tips of the plant may curl and become rolled.
- In onions, damage appears as silvery lines, tip dieback, and reduced yields.
- Thrips can transmit viruses such as tomato spotted wilt virus.

## DESCRIPTION

- Adult thrips are elongate, slender, and tiny (less than 1/20 inch long).
- Wings of thrips have hairs on the edges.
- Larvae are oblong without wings.
- Thrips range in color from translucent white/yellow to dark brown/black.



Thrips damage on cabbage

## LIFECYCLE

- Thrips hatch from egg, complete four larval stages, before becoming adults.
- Both larvae and adults cause feeding damage.
- There are multiple generations per year, 2-3 weeks per generation.
- Most species cannot overwinter in Northern climates and arrive in northern states via weather fronts.

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Tomato spotted wilt virus spread by thrips



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Thrips damage on onion leaves



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Thrips can cause scars and silvery patches on cucumber

## MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

### Cultural - no spray

- Monitor using sticky traps or shake affected part of the plant on a light colored piece of paper to verify infestation.
- Practice good sanitation at the end of the season and remove all plant debris.
- Control weeds during the growing season.
- Apply row covers to susceptible crops.
- Use straw or reflective mulch to deter thrips.
- Encourage naturally occurring populations of beneficial insects by growing diverse plant species and avoid creating dust in the garden.



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Monitor thrips populations by using white, yellow, or blue sticky traps

### Organic pesticides

- There are many OMRI-approved options for management of thrips which include insecticidal soaps, horticultural oil, neem oils, and products containing azadirachtin.

### Synthetic pesticides

- Control using synthetic or OMRI-approved pesticides is challenging due the mobility, feeding behavior, and protected egg stages of thrips.
- Contact your local Extension office for options.

When using pesticide product, ensure the product is labelled for the insect you are trying to manage and well as the type of plant to be treated. When using pesticides, whether **organic** or **synthetic**, follow the instructions on the label. **The label is the law.**



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