



Fourlined Plant Bug

Poecilopsus lineatus (Fabricius); Family: Miridae



Adult Fourlined Plant Bug.

Photo from [Bugwood.org](http://www.bugwood.org)

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Leaf damage from the Fourlined Plant Bug.

Photo from

<http://www.forestryimages.org/Bugwood.org>

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Injury

The fourlined plant bug is a sucking insect that feeds by withdrawing the green-colored matter of the leaf from localized spots. The feeding sites turn brown, and if abundant, coalesce to form a large brown blotch. Relatively few individual bugs can cause great damage.

This insect has a wide range of host plants, including Amur maple, viburnum, currants and gooseberries, and a great variety of herbaceous plants such as chrysanthemum, dahlia, delphinium, lupine, peony, phlox, snapdragon, daisy, mint, sunflower, zinnia, and many garden vegetables.

Description

Adults are yellowish to yellowish-green bugs with four longitudinal black lines down the wing covers. These longitudinal stripes account for this insect's name. The antennae and legs are greenish-black in color. Adults are about 1/4 inch in length. The nymphs are yellowish-green to bright red with blackish spots on the thorax.

Life History

Fourlined plant bugs overwinter in the egg stage, in slits cut by the female in canes of currants, brambles and other woody plants. Eggs hatch in late spring, and the newly emerged red nymphs begin to feed. Nymphs grow rapidly, and are full-grown in about 17 days, in which time they have molted five times. The full-grown nymph is about 1/5 inch (5 mm) long, with black wing pads that extend halfway to the end of the abdomen and bearing a yellowish-green stripe near the outer margins of the wing pads.

The adults appear about mid-June, and are active feeding on plant tissue for about a month, and then they disappear. During the adult stage, mating occurs, and the females commence laying eggs in about one week. The female has a strong ovipositor with which she inserts the eggs into slits cut lengthwise into the stems of plants. One-half dozen or more eggs are packed into the slit, which may be two or three inches long.

Management

Fourlined plant bugs are fast moving insects, the adults will fly when alarmed. Both adults and nymphs drop from foliage when disturbed, making them difficult to find.

Monitor susceptible plants for symptoms of injury (brown spots where feeding has occurred, about 1/8 inch (5-6 mm) in diameter) starting in late May or early June. Nymphs and adults may sometimes be observed by spending time sitting quietly and observing plants.

Control measures are most effective when applied from early June through July. Adults can migrate in to susceptible crops and plants from mid-June through July. For plant bugs on particular ornamentals, insecticidal soap or other insecticides are labelled for you. For any edible crop, check the product label first – plant bugs must be listed, and for the crop you want to treat. **IF NOT LISTED ON LABEL, DO NOT USE THE PESTICIDE.** For edible crops you will also find a “DAYS TO HARVEST” interval listed – the period of time you must wait after treating the crop until you harvest the edible portion.

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This publication contains pesticide recommendations. Changes in pesticide regulations occur constantly and human errors are still possible. Some materials mentioned may no longer be available and some uses may no longer be legal. All pesticides distributed, sold or applied in New York State must be registered with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). Questions concerning the legality and/or registration status for pesticide use in New York State should be directed to the appropriate Cornell Cooperative Extension Specialist or your regional DEC office. READ THE LABEL BEFORE APPLYING ANY PESTICIDE.

<http://idl.entomology.cornell.edu>