

Squash Vine Borer



Squash vine borers are serious pests to both summer and winter squash, as well as pumpkins. The adult moths are harmless, but the larvae burrow into the center of the stems, blocking water and nutrient flow to the rest of the plant. Infected squash and pumpkin plants will begin to wilt, while the fruit and leaves may turn yellow.

Appearance

Adult moths, orange and black in color, emerge in June. They will lay eggs on the stems and base of plants.

Eggs are brown, small oval-shaped and hatch in about 7 days. Larvae will then bore into the stem of susceptible plants to feed.

Cream colored larvae have a black head, and are about 1/2" in length.

Prevention and Control

- Plant squash or pumpkin transplants as early as possible, instead of direct sowing, to allow plants to produce before borers become widespread.
- Wrap aluminum foil around the stems near the base of plants to prevent boring and egg laying.
- Check susceptible plants several times a week, looking for entrance holes. Stems will feel mushy, and have brownish colored sawdust material near entrance hole.
- If found early, you can remove the larvae by cutting them out with a sharp knife, and tie the stem back together using first-aid tape.
- Infected plants should be disposed of in the garbage instead of compost pile to prevent borers from overwintering.
- Sow a second crop in early July, when moths have stopped laying eggs, for a late summer, early fall harvest.

