

Tarnished plant bug

Lygus lineolaris

Crops affected: Capsicum, Cucumber

What is it?

Tarnished plant bug is highly polyphagous. The main covered crop hosts are **capsicum** and **cucumber**. It also affects outdoor crops such as asparagus, beans, beetroot, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, celery, corn, and potato.

What does it look like?

Adults are bronze to dark brown with a diamond shape area on the back where the wings cross. They are about 6 mm long, oval in shape, with white marks or lines behind the head and sometimes along the front wing (Fig 1). Young nymphs are a yellowish-green oval insect. Older nymphs have four round black dots on the back and one on the abdomen (Fig 2). Eggs are cream-coloured and flask-shaped, with a flattened edge. They are very small (1 mm) and laid in plant tissue with the end of the egg visible.

What should I look for?

Typical symptoms include aborted young fruit or buds, deformed fruit, necrosis near the feeding site, damaged seeds, and reduced or deformed vegetative growth including tip dieback (Fig 3 & 4).

How does it spread?

Eggs can be transported over long distances in the leaves of host plants. Adults and nymphs can also be carried on contaminated plant material. Adults can fly short distances

Why is it important?

Adults feed by sucking sap from plants and are thought to inject a toxic substance (possibly digestive enzymes) into the plant to break down plant tissues. They become active very early in the spring, preferring to feed on buds, flowers, young developing fruit or plant terminals which can kill the buds and cause scars to develop on the fruit. It can cause economically important damage at relatively low density.

Where is it present?

Tarnished plant bug is widespread in North and Central America.

How can I protect my industry?

Check your production site frequently for the presence of new pests and unusual symptoms. Make sure you are familiar with common pests of your industry so you can recognise something different.



**COVERED
CROPPING**
NEW ZEALAND



Fig 1. Adult tarnished plant bug.

Photo credit: Russ Ottens, University of Georgia, Bugwood.org



Fig 2. Tarnished plant bug nymph.

Photo credit: Scott Bauer, USDA Agricultural Research Service, Bugwood.org



Fig 3. Damage on cucumber leaf.

Photo credit: Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness, Ontario



Fig 4. Damage on capsicum.

Photo credit: Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness, Ontario