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Aphids on Leafy Vegetables

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How To Control Them



United States
Department of
Agriculture

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This publication is intended for the commercial grower of those vegetables whose leafy or flowering parts are marketed. For recommendations on the control of aphids on such crops in the home garden, contact your county agricultural agent at your local Extension office.

Revised July 1983



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Aphids on Leafy Vegetables --

How To Control Them .

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Aphids, often called plant lice, are small, soft-bodied insects that suck juice from plants. They are present wherever crops are grown.

Aphids cause heavy losses to growers of leafy vegetables by—

- Reducing vigor, yield, and quality of plants.
- Contaminating edible parts.
- Transmitting destructive virus diseases of plants.
- Killing plants, if infestation is heavy.

Most species of aphids are about 1/16 inch long. Species differ in color.

Some individuals of most species have wings; others do not.

Male aphids are rare. Females of all species give birth to living young in the summer. When cold weather approaches, females of most species mate and lay eggs. Females live about a month, and produce 80 to 100 young.

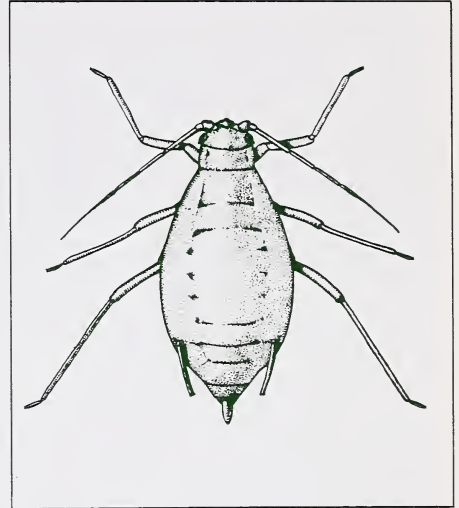
Kinds of Aphids

Several species of aphids attack leafy vegetables.

Green Peach Aphid

The green peach aphid,¹ known also as the spinach aphid and the tobacco aphid, is about the size of a cabbage seed. Both wingless and winged types are yellowish green or pinkish green; the winged type is darker.

This aphid feeds on many plants. It is most destructive to spinach, beets, celery, lettuce, and chard. It also causes some injury to cabbage and related cole crops, dandelion, endive, mustard greens, parsley, and turnip.



Green peach aphid, wingless form (BN-10059).

It spreads several virus diseases of plants, including beet mosaic, beet yellows (which also attacks spinach), and lettuce mosaic.

In the Southern States, in Arizona and California, and in extreme western Oregon and Washington, nearly all green peach aphids are females that deposit their young without mating. Reproduction takes place throughout the year. As many as 30 generations a year occur in the extreme South.

Continuous reproduction by unmated females, and overwintering of this form of the insect, occur as far north as warmer parts of New Jersey, Maryland, Virginia, Tennessee, Arkansas, and Oklahoma, and in at least one area in Washington.

In these and colder areas, males and egg-laying females also develop in the fall. This aphid generally survives the winter only in the egg stage in areas where minimum temperatures drop to 0°F or below. Eggs are laid mostly on peach, wild

¹*Myzus persicae*.



Cabbage plant injured by cabbage aphids (TC-7319).

plum, and cherry trees. They hatch in the spring, and the young aphids feed where the eggs were laid. New broods develop and spread to vegetables and other host plants.

Cabbage Aphid

The cabbage aphid² is found throughout the United States. It is distinguished from other species by a powdery, waxy covering over its body. Color is grayish green.

This aphid feeds primarily on cabbage, cauliflower, collards, broccoli, kale, and other cole crops. It seldom damages mustard or turnips.

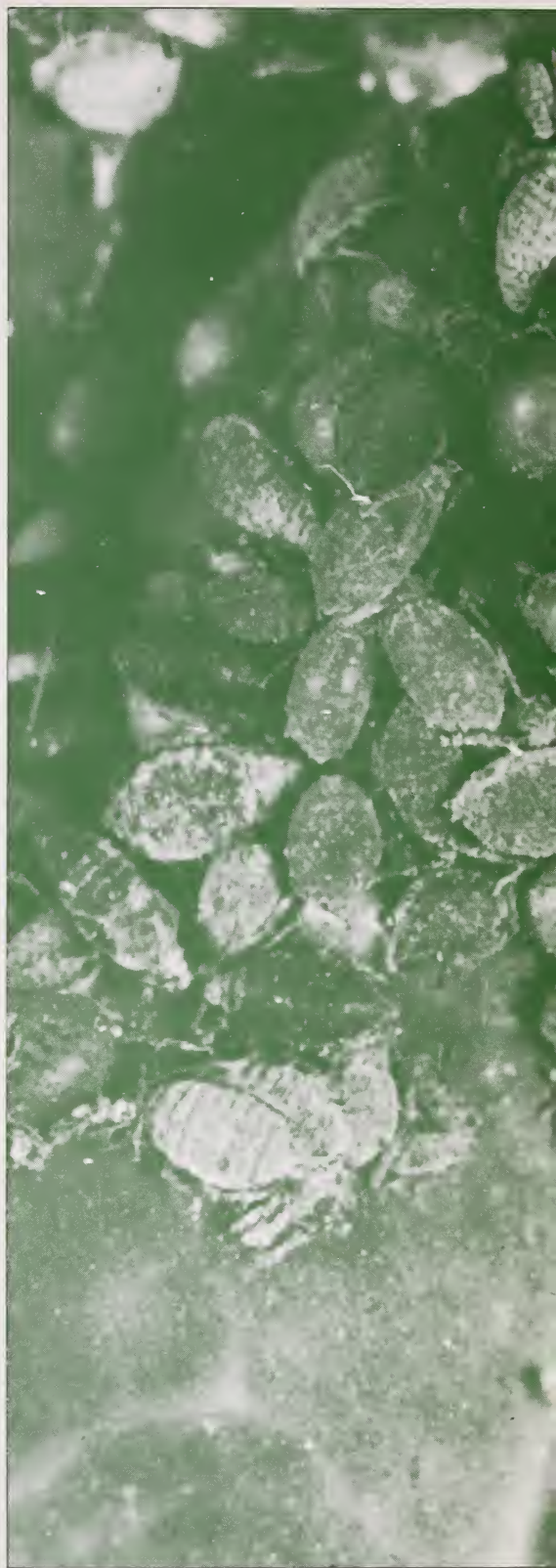
In the Southern States, 30 or more generations of females, both winged and wingless, are produced throughout the year. In colder climates, males and females occur in the fall; they mate and the females lay eggs that survive the winter. Eggs of this aphid usually are laid on the residues of host crops that have been left in the field.

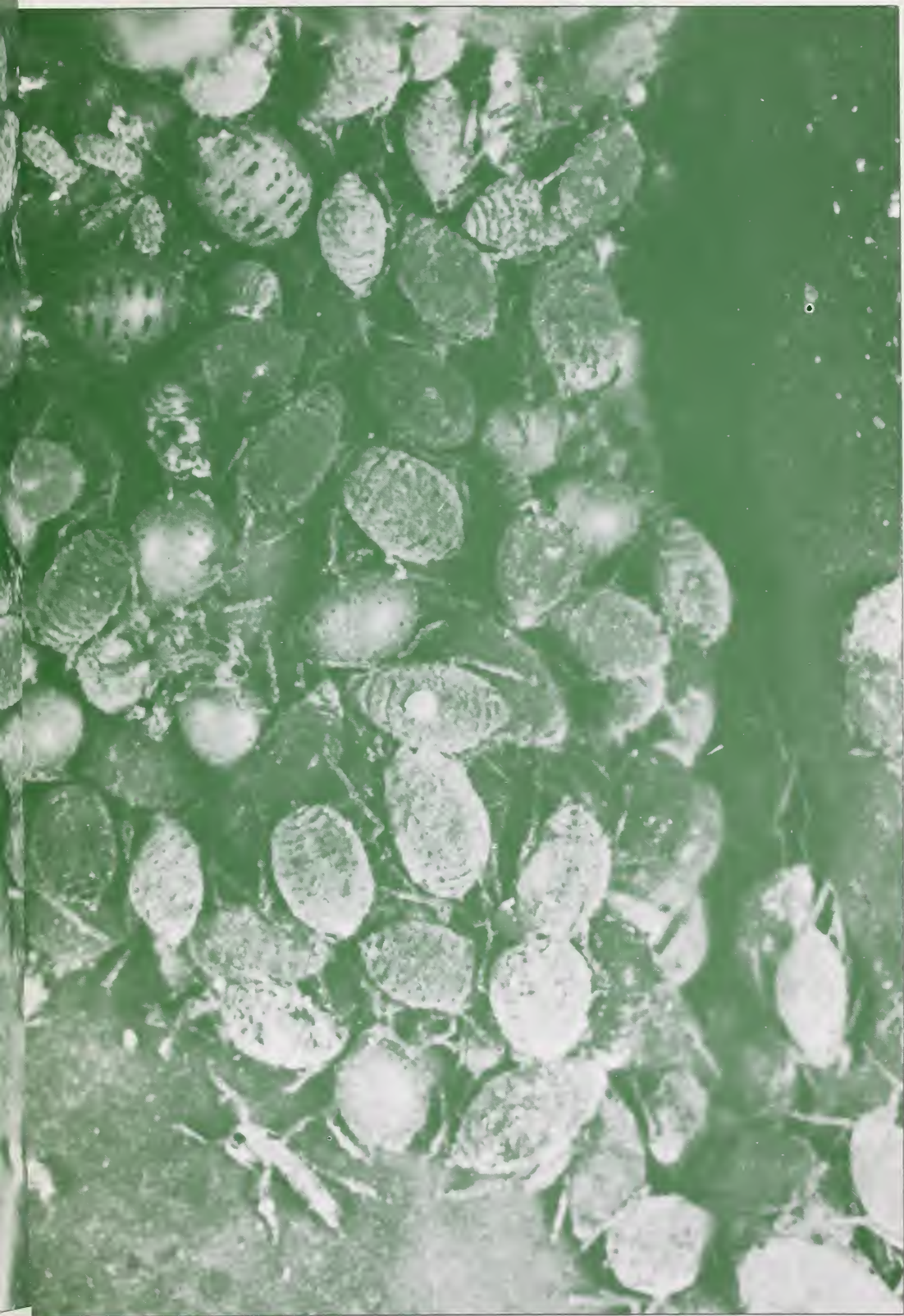
Turnip Aphid

The turnip aphid³ is also called the turnip louse and the false cabbage aphid.

²*Brevicoryne brassicae*.

³*Hyadaphis pseudobrassicae*.





Cabbage aphids: Several near center of picture have been killed by a parasitic

insect, have lost their powdery covering, and have become shiny tan (TC-7322).

This aphid resembles the cabbage aphid, but does not have a waxy body covering. It is pale green. The winged form has black spots, a black head, and transparent wings marked by black veins.

The turnip aphid is widely distributed in the United States and causes heavy losses to growers, especially in the South. It feeds chiefly on turnip, mustard, and radish plants. It also injures other crucifers, particularly in their seedling stage.

Full-grown females give birth to 50 to 100 young during their reproductive period of 20 to 30 days. In the Gulf Coast region as many as 46 generations have been observed in a year.

The habits of this insect are similar to those of the cabbage aphid, except that egg laying is rare.

Other Aphids

The bean aphid⁴ ranges in color from dark olive-green to black. It has been found on beets in Arizona, and on beets and chard in other sections. It is not usually a serious pest of other leafy vegetables.

The bean aphid passes the winter in the North as eggs on species of euonymus, and to a limited extent on snowball and deutzia. Little is known of its life history in the South, but probably successive generations of females are produced there throughout the year. A common weed, dock, is a favored host.

Macrosiphum ambrosiae is the scientific name of a large reddish aphid that damages lettuce in eastern Virginia, coastal South Carolina, and southern Texas. In eastern Virginia it feeds on endive plants.

An aphid known as *Macrosiphum barri* damages lettuce in Arizona, California, and some of the other Western States.



Macrosiphum ambrosiae, an aphid that attacks lettuce and endive plants (TAX601).

The potato aphid⁵, which occurs in both green and pink colors, attacks spinach at times in the fall in Virginia.

Natural Controls

Sometimes natural controls hold down the aphid population. Other insects that kill aphids are important natural controls. Fungus diseases and certain weather conditions also help destroy aphids.

Insects That Kill Aphids

Both parasitic and predatory insects help keep aphids in check.

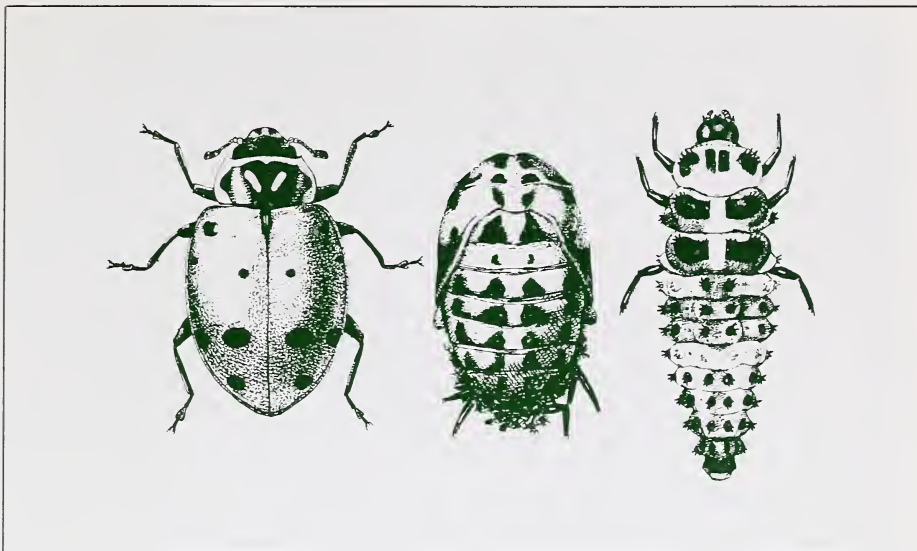
Four-winged, wasplike insects parasitize aphids. The females lay eggs in the bodies of aphids; when the eggs hatch, the larvae feed on the aphids.

The parasites reproduce rapidly under favorable conditions. Usually they become abundant during spring and early summer.

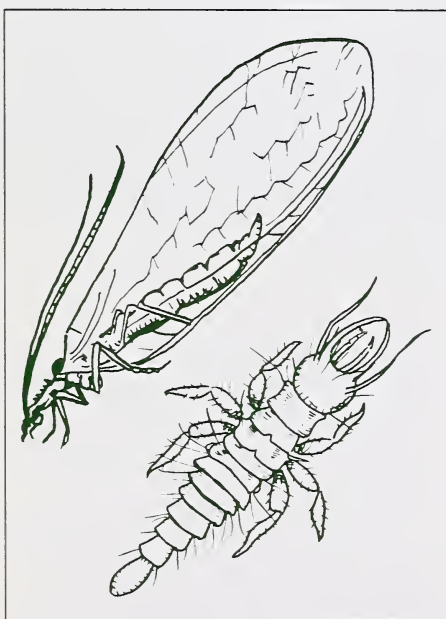
The predatory insects that feed on aphids are lady beetles, soldier bugs, assassin bugs, and the larvae

⁴*Aphis fabae*.

⁵*Macrosiphum euphorbiae*.



Adult pupa, and larva of lady beetle—a beneficial insect (TC-2202).



Adult and larva of green lacewing (BN-10060).

of lady beetles, syrphid flies, and green lacewings. They are most active during summer and fall.

If inspection shows that insect enemies are present, do not apply an insecticide unless the aphids begin to increase. Insecticides also kill the insects that kill aphids. Then, aphids that survive multiply rapidly, and repeated applications of insecticide become necessary.

Diseases

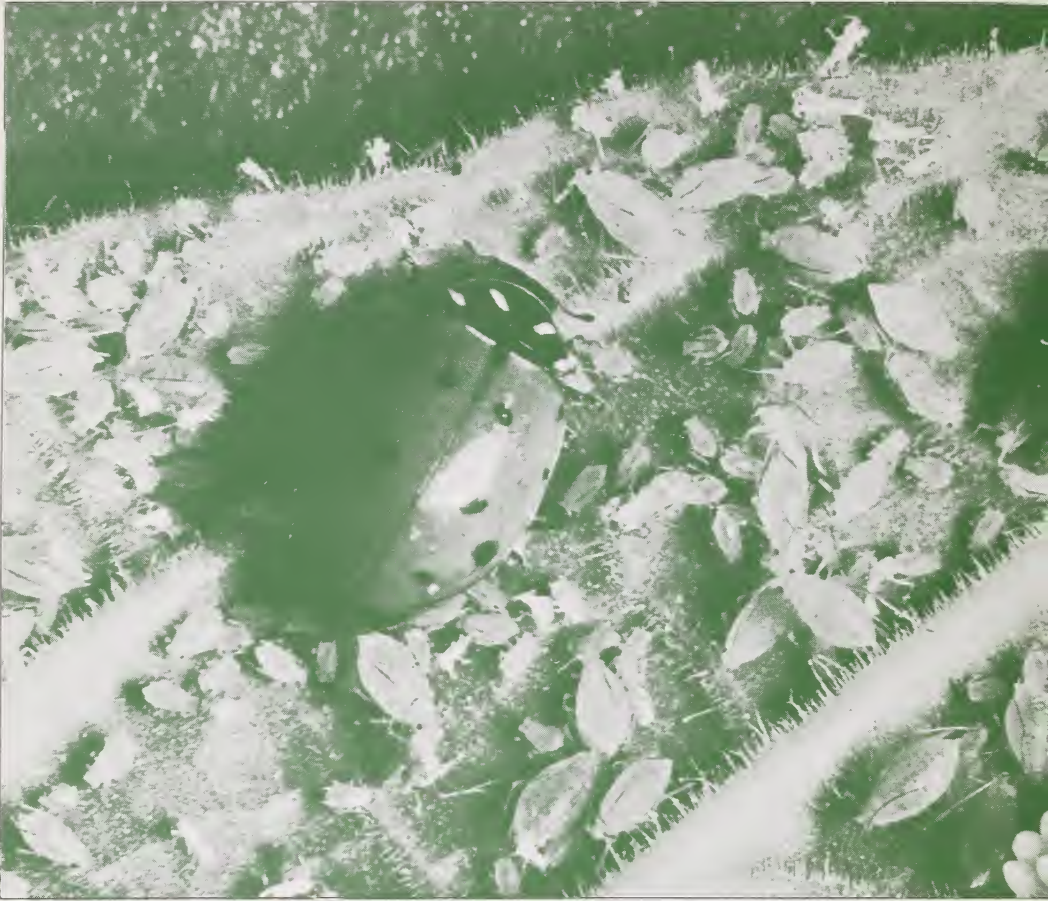
Fungus disease sometimes kill aphids. However, this seldom happens before the aphids have become numerous and caused considerable damage.

Aphids killed by a fungus change shape and turn tan or light brown. Sometimes the fungus attaches them to the plant.

Weather

Aphids are sensitive to weather conditions. Hard, driving rains kill large numbers of some species. Damp weather favors the development of diseases that kill aphids.

Aphids reproduce most rapidly at moderate temperatures. High tem-



Adult and larvae of lady beetle, feeding on aphids (BN-27052). (Courtesy of Clemson Agricultural College, South Carolina.)

peratures are unfavorable to the kinds of aphids that attack leafy vegetables.

Control Measures

You can control aphids by following cultural practices that keep the insects in check, and by applying an insecticide.

Cultural Practices

These cultural practices insure better crops, and help keep aphids under control:

- Start with a well-prepared, fertile seedbed.
- Do not plant on land from which a similar aphid-infested crop has been recently removed.
- Do not plant near a growing

crop of aphid-infested vegetables.

- Clear the field and surrounding area of aphid host plants.

- Plant seed in drills, to facilitate cultivation and application of insecticide.

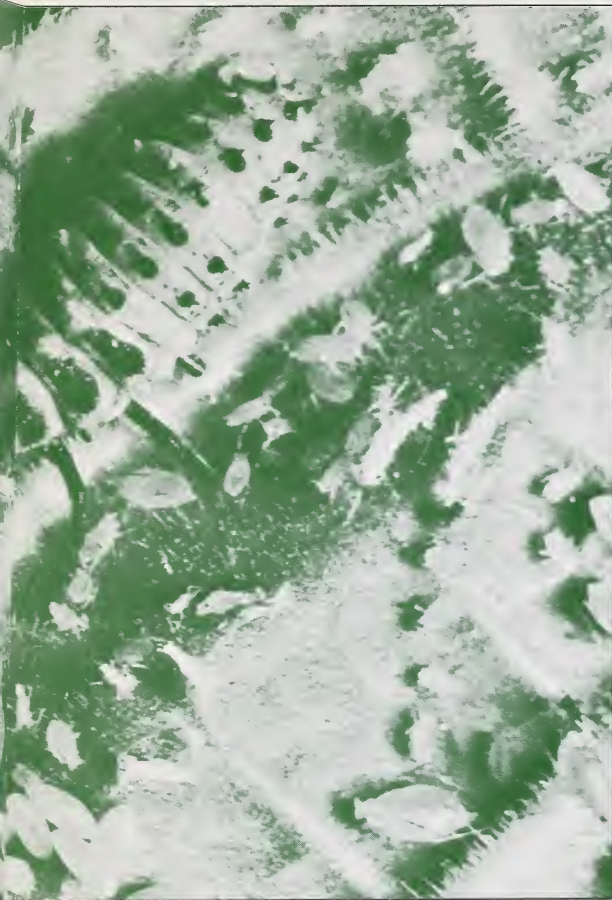
- Apply a nitrogenous fertilizer (20 to 30 pounds of nitrogen per acre) soon after plants come up. Fertilize plants adequately throughout their growth.

- Irrigate during dry weather, if possible.

- Harvest the crop as soon as it is ready. Dispose of crop residue immediately.

Control With Insecticides

You should apply an insecticide as soon as it becomes evident that natural controls are not keeping the



aphids in check. If experience has shown that infestations are seldom checked by their insect enemies, start applications before the aphids become abundant.

Selecting Insecticides

In selecting an insecticide, choose a material that (1) is approved for use on your particular crop, (2) can be applied at the time needed without leaving excessive residue on the crop, and (3) can be applied safely with available equipment.

The accompanying table gives suitable insecticides for each crop, and tells how they can be applied and the time that should be allowed between the last application and harvest.

Applying Insecticides to the Foliage

Apply insecticides to the foliage of plants by either spraying or dusting.

Spray or dust during calm, warm weather. Cover plants thoroughly; be sure the insecticide reaches aphids on the undersides of leaves, and inside folded leaves and buds.

Spraying

The recommended insecticides are available as an emulsifiable concentrate or wettable powder. Mix with water as directed in the table.

Use 20 to 100 gallons of mixed spray per acre. Maximum amounts of insecticide are needed when the plants are large or the infestation is heavy.

Sprays should be used as soon as possible after they are mixed.

Dusting

Dusts are ready to use when purchased.

Apply dusts when plants are moist but not wet, and when there is little wind. These conditions exist most often after sunset and early in the morning. Effective dusting can be done at night, with the aid of hand-held lights or lights mounted on the equipment. Early morning dusting is satisfactory unless the plants are so heavy with dew that the dust runs off the leaves.

If wind is a problem, cover nozzles of the duster with a cloth or plastic apron. Allow apron to trail 15 to 25 feet behind the duster.

Use 20 to 25 pounds of dust per acre.

When to Apply

The best time to apply insecticides to foliage varies in different localities. For information about your area, consult your county agricultural agent, State Extension entomologist, or State agricultural college.

Generally, you should start look-

ing for aphid infestation in the early stages of plant growth. Examine plants in various parts of the field. If you find only a few aphids, examine plants every few days. If aphids begin to increase rapidly, apply an insecticide before they become abundant.

Time the applications so crops will be free of aphids when ready for harvest. Presence of aphids on a marketed crop, such as spinach, greatly reduces the crop's value.

Do not apply an insecticide too close to harvesttime. If you do, too much residue may remain on edible parts of the crop. Crops having excessive residues may not be shipped across State lines. The table lists, for each crop and each insecticide, the minimum days that should elapse between application and harvest.

Use of Pesticides

Pesticide use is governed by a Federal law administered by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). This law requires manufacturers to register pesticides, and makes it illegal for people to use them except in accordance with the instructions on the label.

Using Insecticide in Transplant Water

Spray or dust plants with insecticide before pulling them for transplanting.

Add an insecticide labeled for use in transplant water. The chemical is absorbed by young plants, and protects them while they are becoming established in field rows. Use at least 450 gallons of water per acre or at least ½ cupful for each plant. This volume will be required when about 14,500 plants are transplanted per acre, if they are set 1 foot apart in 3-foot rows.

Apply pesticides uniformly and be sure they come in contact **ONLY** with plants or areas you intend to treat.

Registrations of pesticides are under constant review by EPA. As new information is developed and evaluated, registrations may be changed or withdrawn. For the latest information on pesticides and how to use them, consult your Cooperative Extension Service or Agricultural Experiment Station in your State.

Special Precautions

Malathion can be used safely without special protective clothing or devices if it is in diluted dust or water-spray form. However, malathion concentrates require special precautions.

Diazinon, dimethoate, endosulfan, and naled can be absorbed directly through the skin in harmful quantities. When working with these insecticides in any form, use extra care.

Demeton, disulfoton, mevinphos, methamidophos, and parathion are extremely poisonous **and may be fatal if swallowed, inhaled, or absorbed through the skin. They should be applied only by a person who is thoroughly familiar with their hazards and who will assume full responsibility for safe use and comply with all precautions on the labels.** Reduce the danger of skin exposure to these insecticides by wearing recommended protective clothing and equipment. Wear a respirator or mask of a type that has been tested and found to be satisfactory for protection against the particular insecticides you are using.

Wear clean, dry, cotton gloves if you transplant or handle plants within 5 days after treatment with demeton, disulfoton, parathion, or methamidophos, or within 1 day after treatment with mevinphos.

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- Follow label instructions carefully •

Insecticides, dosages, and formulations for control of aphids on leafy commercially produced vegetables

Insecticide	Crops on which it may be used	Minimum days from last application to harvest	Pounds per acre of active ingredients	Formulation ¹	Safety restrictions
Demeton . . . (Systox)	Broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower	21	0.5	EC	} (2)
	Lettuce	21	.25- .5	EC	
	Celery	28	.25	EC	
Diazinon . . .	Broccoli, cauliflower . .	7	.25- .5	EC, WP	} (3)
	Cabbage	7	.25- .5	EC, WP	
	Brussels sprouts	7	.5	EC, WP	
	Celery, lettuce	10	.25- .5	EC, WP	
	Collards, kale, spinach, turnip tops	10	.25- .5	EC, WP	
	Swiss chard	12	.25- .5	EC, WP	
	Beets	14	.25- .5	EC, WP	
Dimethoate . (Cygon, Rogor, De-fend)	Cabbage	3	.25- .5	EC	} (3)
	Broccoli, cauliflower . .	7	.25- .5	EC	
	Lettuce, head	7	.25	EC	
	Collards, leaf lettuce, mustard greens, spinach, turnip greens and roots . . .	14	.25	EC	
Disulfoton . . (Di-syston)	Broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower	(4)	1.0	G, LC	} (2)
	Lettuce	(4)	1.0 -2.0	G, LC	
	Spinach	(4)	1.0	G, LC	
Endosulfan . . (Thiodan, Malix)	Broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbage . . .	(6)	.38- .5	EC, D, WP	} (2) (7)
	Lettuce (green peach aphid)	14	.75-1.0	EC, D, WP	
	Celery	4	.75	EC, D, WP	
	Collards	21	.25- .5	EC, D, WP	
	Spinach	21	.37- .75	EC	

See footnotes at end of table.

Continued on next page

Insecticides, dosages, and formulations for control of aphids on leafy commercially produced vegetables—Continued

Insecticide	Crops on which it may be used	Minimum days from last application to harvest	Pounds per acre of active ingredients	Formulation ¹	Safety restrictions	
Malathion . . .	Broccoli	3	.62 -1.25	EL	} (3) (8)	
	Turnips	3	.5	WP (25%)		
	Cabbage	7	1.20	D (4%)		
	Beets	7	.90 -1.25	EL		
	Brussels sprouts		7	.93 -1.5		EL
				.5		WP (25%)
				1.20		D (4%)
	Cauliflower	7	2.0	D (4%)		
	Celery	7	.90	EL		
	Collards		7	.6 -1.4		EL
				.5		WP (25%)
				1.20 -1.40		D (4%)
	Lettuce		(5)	1.25		EL
				1.25		WP (25%)
				1.20		D (4%)
Mustard greens		7	.62 -1.25	EL		
			.5	WP (25%)		
			1.20	D (4%)		
Kale		7	.62 -1.6	EL		
			.5	WP (25%)		
			1.20	D (4%)		
Spinach		7	1.25	EL		
			1.20 -1.40	D (4%)		
Swiss chard		7	.93 -1.25	EL		
			.5	WP (25%)		
			1.20 -1.40	D (4%)		
Methamidophos (Monitor)	Cauliflower	28	.75 -1.0	EC	} (3)	
	Brussels sprouts	14	.5 -1.0	EC		
	Cabbage	35	.75 -1.0	EC		
	Broccoli	14	.5	EC		
	Broccoli	21	.5 -1.0	EC		
Mevinphos (Phosdrin)	Broccoli, cabbage	1	.125- .25	EC, SP, D	} (3)	
	Lettuce	2	.125- .25	EC, SP		
	Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, celery, collards, kale, beet roots and tops, mustard greens, turnip tops		3	.125- .25		EC, SP, D
	Spinach	4	.25	EC, SP, D		

See footnotes at end of table.

Insecticides, dosages, and formulations for control of aphids on leafy commercially produced vegetables—Continued

Insecticide	Crops on which it may be used	Minimum days from last application to harvest	Pounds per acre of active ingredients	Formulation ¹	Safety restrictions	
Naled (Dibrom)	Broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, kale . . .	1	1.0	EC	} (3)	
			1.2	-2.0 D		
	Collards	1	1.0	EC, D		
	Celery, lettuce, spinach, swiss chard, turnip greens	1	1.0	-1.5 EC, D		
Parathion . . . ethyl	Broccoli, brussels sprouts, cauliflower	(6)	.125-	.25 .15 - .5 D	} (3) (9)	
			.2	- .5		
	Cabbage, collards, turnips	(6)	.25 - .5	EC .15 - .5 WP .2 - .5 D		
				D		
	Kale, mustard greens . .	(6)	.15 - .5	EC, WP .25 EC		
	Spinach	14	.2	EC, WP, D		
	Lettuce, bib and leaf . .		21	.25 - .5		EC .45 - .5 WP .35 - .5 D
						D
		Lettuce, head	7	.5		EC, WP, D
	Beet:					
	Roots	15	.25	EC, WP		
	Tops	21	.25	EC, WP		
	Celery		21	.2		EC, WP
				.4 - .5		D
Swiss chard		21	.5	EC		
			.2 - .3	D		

¹D= Dust, EC= Emulsifiable concentrate, EL= Emulsifiable liquid, G= Granular, LC= Liquid concentrate, SP= Soluble powder, WP= Wettable powder.

²This product is toxic to bees and should not be applied when bees are actively visiting the area.

³This product is highly toxic to bees exposed to direct treatment or residues on crops.

⁴Refer to label for days to harvest for treatment limitations.

⁵14 leaf or 7 head.

⁶Refer to label for higher rate requirements and days to harvest for treatment limitations.

⁷Do not apply more than 2 times on leaf lettuce; do not apply on head lettuce more than 3 times after thinning; remove outside leaves at harvest. Do not feed crop waste to livestock.

⁸Malathion will intensify smog damage to table beets, spinach, and some types of leaf lettuce.

⁹Parathion is not effective at low temperatures.

