



LEAFMINERS

Host Plants and Description

Leafminers are the larvae of moths, beetles, sawflies or flies. They are pests of trees, shrubs, perennials and vegetables, and are especially troublesome on birch, holly, chrysanthemum, spinach, nasturtium and columbine. Immature leafminers are maggot or worm-like creatures that spend all of their time inside the leaf. Adults lay eggs on the outside of the leaf, and immediately upon hatching, the immature miner works its way inside. When the young leafminer is finished feeding, it drops to the ground to pupate.

Plant Damage/Symptoms

Mines appear as white or brown areas within the leaf; these areas may be serpentine lines, circular areas or irregular blotches. Sometimes the damage will cause foliage to yellow. Hold the leaf in front of a light source—if active leafminers are present, they will be visible inside.

Controls

In most cases, leafminers do not do serious enough damage to warrant control. If leafminers are discovered while they are still actively feeding, pinch off and destroy the infected leaves. If the damage is on a vegetable crop such as spinach, harvest the crop at the earliest possible time and then cultivate the soil in the area. This will disturb the leafminers' pupae, leaving them susceptible to attacks from birds and other natural predators. For yearly infestations in a vegetable garden, cover the crop with a floating row cover just before the leafminers are expected to make their appearance.