Extension Bulletin 0902

insect answers

LILAC LEAFMINER

The lilac leafminer, *Gracillaria syringella*, (leaf blotch miners, family Gracillariidae) attacks nearly all varieties of lilac. It is also known to attack privet, ash, deutzia, and euonymus. The moth originated in Europe and inhabits eastern Canada, northeastern United States, and the Pacific Northwest.

Life History

Adult moths emerge in the spring from overwintering pupae in old leaves and soil. They are small with a wingspan of ⅔ inch (10 mm). The wings are brown with six irregular yellow lines. The female deposits small groups of eggs along the midrib and other veins on the undersides of leaves.

Lilac leaves infested with lilac leafminer larvae.

Upon hatching, the new larva enters the leaf directly under the egg shell and creates a linear mine which cannot be seen from the top of the leaf. The second larval stage begins to form the unsightly blotch mines. Later the larvae leave the mines and roll the leaves. The larvae are glossy green, and there may be several larvae per mine.

When the larval population is especially heavy, the brown, unsightly leaves will drop prematurely. When mature, the larvae drop to the soil on silken threads and pupate. In midsummer, the moths emerge and lay eggs for a second generation which overwinter as larvae or pupae. There may be a third generation in late summer, in which case this would be the overwintering generation.

Control

If only an occasional leaf is infested, pick it off and destroy it. Since the larvae pupate among litter and old leaves, future problems can be avoided by clean garden practices. Rake up and destroy old leaves. Chemical control may be necessary if unsightliness becomes intolerable (or the plant is suffering serious defoliation).

Diazinon or Orthene is recommended for control of this pest. Spray when blotches are first noticed or at least before the larvae roll the leaves. Repeat applications may be necessary. Be sure the plant or a category which includes the plant is listed on the label of the insecticide you choose. The commonly available malathion products do not have lilac leafminer listed, but they may be used provided the plant is indicated.

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION
Washington State University

By S.J. Collman, M.S., Extension Specialist, Liaison to the EPA, and A.L. Antonelli, Ph.D., Extension Entomologist, WSU, Puyallup.

Use pesticides with care. Apply them only to plants, animals, or sites listed on the label. When mixing and applying pesticides, follow all label precautions to protect yourself and others around you. It is a violation of the law to disregard label directions. If pesticides are spilled on skin or clothing, remove clothing and wash skin thoroughly. Store pesticides in their original containers and keep them out of the reach of children, pets, and livestock.

The law requires that pesticides be used as the label directs. Uses against pests not named on the label and low application rates are permissible exceptions. If there is any apparent conflict between label directions and the pesticide uses suggested in this publication, consult your county Extension Agent.

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