

Problem: Hollyhock Weevil: *Apion longirostre*



Host: Hollyhock

Description: This insect pest, which is native of Europe, feeds on seeds, leaves, and buds before they open causing bud abortion or flower distortion. Feeding on leaves may result in a tattered appearance when leaves fully develop. Adults are small, being 1/8 inch or 3.0 mm in length, gray to black in color with orange legs, and are primarily located around developing flower buds. Larvae feed on the seeds. Hollyhock weevil overwinters as an adult in protected locations near hollyhocks or in seeds. Since hollyhock normally reseeds itself, populations of this insect can cause hollyhock patches to thin out.

Adults emerge in spring and chew small holes in buds. In addition, weevils can be observed mating on flower buds with the smaller males mounted on the back of females. Females tend to have a much longer snout or beak than males because of their feeding behavior. During feeding, females chew deep pits (indentations) in the buds in which they lay eggs. The cream-colored grub or larval stage feeds on the developing embryo of the seed. After larvae have completed feeding, they pupate within the seed. Most adults typically emerge in August through September with some remaining in the seed that will emerge the following spring. There is usually one generation per year.

Recommendations: Hollyhock weevil management involves simply “knocking,” “shaking,” or dislodging adults from flower buds into a container of soapy water, which should immediately kill them. This method is most effective in preventing damage to hollyhock flowers when conducted twice per week. Routinely removing and disposing of seed pods will kill any developing larvae. Contact insecticides that can be used to suppress or regulate hollyhock weevil populations include acephate (Orthene, Bonide Systemic Insect Control), malathion and pyrethroid-based compounds such as bifenthrin (Hi-Yield Bug Blaster Bifenthrin), permethrin (Eight; Hi-Yield Garden & Farm Insect Control), and cyhalothrin (Spectracide Triazicide); however, these materials are harmful to natural enemies and bees (e.g., honey and bumble bees) so they should only be used if absolutely necessary. Avoid open flowers.

References:

1. [Hollyhock Weevil](#), Kansas Insect Newsletter, May 24, 2012, No. 11, K-State Research & Extension
2. [Hollyhock Weevils Cause Reduced Flowering](#), Utah Pests News, Vol. V, Summer, 2011, Utah State University

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