

Sweet Potato Tortoise Beetle

Farmer
Fact Sheet

54

What is it?

It is a beetle that feeds on sweet potato, kangkong, and morning glory plants.

Damage

Adults feed on leaves, making small to medium-sized holes (photo, left). The larvae at first eat the leaf surface; later they eat their way through the leaf. The effect on production of sweet potatoes is probably small.



How do I identify it?

Look for the round golden beetles; they are about 5 mm diameter, oval and slightly flattened (photo, right). They have clear wing margins that cover the body and extend over the legs. The larvae have an “anal fork” at the back, which collects skins and faeces; it can be moved from side to side, probably to scare predators.

How to manage sweet potato tortoise beetle

RESISTANT VARIETIES: None known, but fast-growing varieties may outgrow the damage.

CULTURAL CONTROL

- Avoid planting new crops next to those already infested with the beetles;
- Practice good hygiene: collect and destroy vines after harvest;
- Promote healthy plant growth with manures, mulches, fertilizers, and adequate water;
- Remove weeds (especially those in the morning glory family) around the gardens.

CHEMICAL CONTROL

- Spread ash over the crop as soon as the beetles are seen (**see Fact Sheet no. 56d**);
- Use synthetic pyrethroid insecticides, such as lambda cyhalothrin or permethrin;
- Use derris. A local Derris variety, originally from Papua New Guinea, is being multiplied by MAL and the Kastom Gaden Association (**see Fact Sheet no. 56c**).

AUTHORS **Helen Tsatsia** • **Grahame Jackson**

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