Striped flea beetle on Chinese Kale

Recognize the problem
Striped flea beetles are small insects (1 mm) that feed on Chinese kale and other brassica crops. Adults are black with a yellow line on their back. The insect can move by jumping or flying. The larva is white with a brown head and feeds on the roots. Adult feeding damage is easily recognised by the small circular holes made in the leaves. The beetles attack all stages of the plant until harvest.

Background
Both adult beetles and larvae can cause damage to Chinese kale. However, once seedlings have grown beyond the 2 or 3 leaf stage, striped flea beetles do not usually kill the plant. Roots damaged by the larvae can cause the plant to wilt during hot periods of the day. The beetles prefer to feed on just a few crop plants and are commonly found on cabbage, radish and other brassica crops.

Management
• Seedlings should be scouted every couple of days for flea beetles and flea beetle damage. Small plants cannot survive much damage.
• Do not plant out the seedlings until they are past the 2 leaf stage as this is when they are more tolerant to attack.
• Plant crops such as sweet basil or lemongrass all the way around the crop. These plants will attract the beetles and prevent them from finding the cabbage.
• Use a sprinkler during cool weather to disturb the adults.
• Crop rotation from one season to the next can reduce the population of larvae in the soil. Plant a crop like lettuce which the beetles do not like to eat.
• After the crop is harvested remove crop debris, plough the soil and allow it to dry for several days. This will kill some of the eggs and larvae.

Scientific name(s) > Phyllotreta striolata

The recommendations in this factsheet are relevant to: Cambodia

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