



# Potato tuberworm

## About the Potato Tuberworm

Potato tuberworm tunnel in tubers, stems, fruit, or leaves. The larvae have dark heads and are dull white to pinkish and are relatively small (less than 1.3 cm).

## Damage

Severe damage to young plants is rare. However, high numbers of worms in very young plants can reduce plant stand or stunt plants as a result of leaf and stem mining.

**Tomatoes:** Tuberworms burrow into fruit and into terminal stems, causing stems to die.

**Potatoes:** Tuberworms tunnel into tubers, stalks, and leaves. The tuber eyes turn pink with insect excrement and silk.

## Solutions

**Cultural control** The damage to crops such as tomatoes, eggplant, or peppers can be avoided by not planting these crops near infested potato crops or following a potato crop in a garden.

Avoid tuberworm damage in potatoes, by keeping plants deeply hilled with soil when planting. Prevention of soil cracking in the beds will reduce tuberworm damage. Cracking of the soil is less severe under sprinkler irrigation than with furrow irrigation. Thus, furrow-irrigated fields have a much greater potential to become infested than sprinkler-irrigated fields. Harvest potatoes promptly. Destroy infested tubers or store them at temperatures below 52° F to prevent tuberworm development.

**Chemical control** Insecticides such as pyrethroids, carbamates, or organophosphates primarily kill adults. If used, applications are best in the evening when moths are active. Always follow instructions and safety procedures when applying agrochemicals. Pheromones are available and can be used for monitoring for the presence of the adults.

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**Source and Photos:** Statewide IPM Program, Agriculture and Natural Resources, University of California <http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/index.html>

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Potato tuberworm larva



Tuber damage in potatoes