



Speckled Green Fruitworm (*Orthosia hibisci*)

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Do You Know?

- Fruitworms chew holes in fruits and leaves, and can cause localized defoliation of fruit trees.
- Fruitworms can be monitored with beat-samples (abrupt shaking of tree branches over a tray).
- Applications of reduced-risk insecticides, such as *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) and spinosad formulations, are effective for control.

In Utah, the speckled green fruitworm (Order Lepidoptera, Family Noctuidae) is a common pest of fruit trees. The larvae (caterpillars) hatch in spring and begin feeding on buds, flowers, leaves and young fruit. The larvae can also feed on a variety of ornamental trees, such as willow, birch, poplar, alder, and maple.



Fig. 1. Speckled green fruitworm larva.

HOST INJURY AND MONITORING

The speckled green fruitworm generally does not cause serious damage, though high densities can cause localized defoliation. The larva (Fig. 1) feeds on flowers, leaves, and fruit. Feeding damage to early-season fruit, such as young apples and cherries (Fig. 2), results in severe malformation of the mature fruit (Fig. 3). Beat-samples (shaking or banging limbs over a light-colored tray) are a good way to determine if fruitworm larvae are present.



Fig. 2. Apple fruitlet injured by fruitworm feeding.



Fig. 3. Mature apple with fruitworm injury.

DESCRIPTION AND LIFE HISTORY

The speckled green fruitworm spends the winter as a pupa in the soil. Adult moths emerge in April and May and lay egg masses (100-300 eggs each) in the tree canopy. The moth is stout, reddish brown (approximately 3/4-inch long, 1/2-inch wide) with subtle spotting on the

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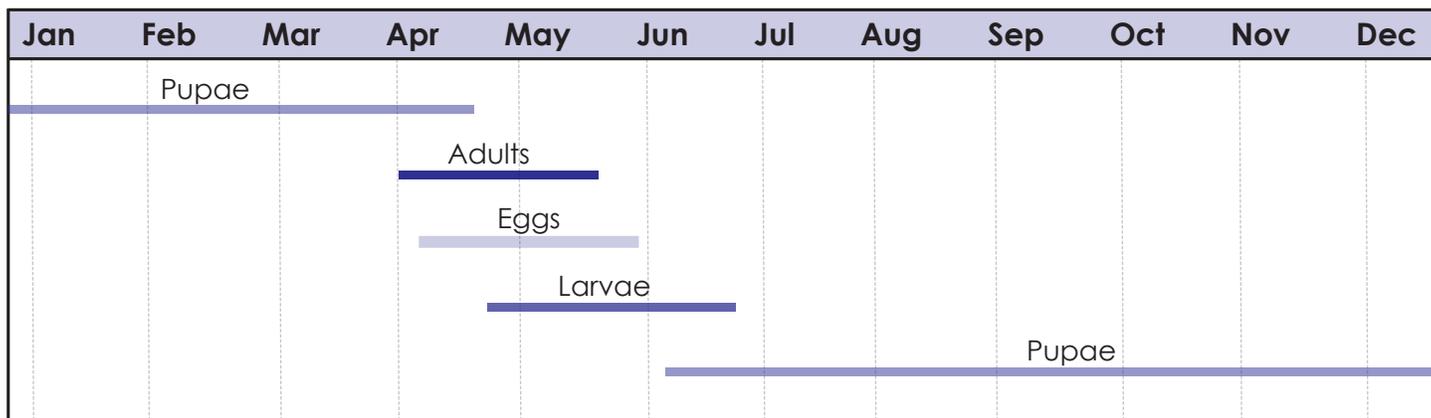


Fig. 4. Speckled green fruitworm life history in northern Utah.

wings. Larvae begin hatching in late April in northern Utah, and are present through June. There is one generation per year (Fig. 4).

The larva has a lime-green head, and pale green body with white speckles, and white lines running along its back and sides (Fig. 1). This coloration allows it to hide amongst leaves and young fruit.

MANAGEMENT

Speckled green fruitworms are generally not a problem where insecticides are applied for other fruit insect pests. They are easily suppressed with the bacterial insecticides *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) (many formulations) and spinosad (Success, Entrust, Conserve), and most broad-spectrum insecticides.

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