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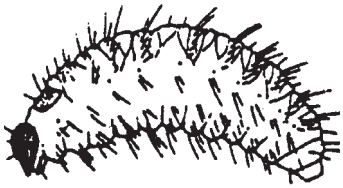
# Taxus Weevil

*Otiorhynchus sulcatus or black vine weevil*



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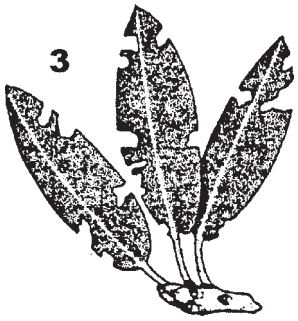

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The taxus weevil continues to be a serious pest on taxus, rhododendron, azalea, hemlock, euonymus, ilex and many other plants used around the home.

The adult is black (figure 2), about 3/8" long. It feeds primarily on the foliage of plants, causing a distinctive type of injury (figure 3). The feeding is done only at night, and the injury of the leaves is aesthetic and less serious than that caused by the feeding of grubs on the roots or adults at the crown. Crown feeding by adults is more common to younger azaleas.

The grubs (figure 1) are legless, white with brown heads and live in soil. They feed on roots and in heavy infestation destroy most of the smaller feeder roots. Large roots at the base of the plant may be girdled. Heavily infested plants grow little, and the foliage is frequently yellow. Destruction of roots reduces the absorption of water and the foliage may dry out.

## Life History

Taxus weevils pass the winter in both the larval and adult stages. The adults usually hide in trash and weeds, whereas the larval stages overwinter on the roots of the plants. There are two interesting facts about the adult beetles. One is that their wing covers are tightly grown together and they are unable to fly. The only way they move is either in grub stage in an evergreen ball, or walking, being carried or transported in some manner. The second interesting fact about the black vine weevil or taxus weevil is that all the adults are females. They reproduce parthenogenetically. No males have ever been found in the species. In this area, the adults usually start emerging about the third week in June; however, yearly climatic conditions and other factors will alter this.

## Management Options

### Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Considerations

IPM is a common sense approach to pest control and plant care. It employs a number of measures to prevent, control or reduce plant problems. These include using resistant plant varieties, proper plant selection and placement, good aftercare and biological and/or mechanical controls. As a last resort, after all othr remedies have been explored, a pesticide* that is least toxic to people and natural predators, can be considered. Prior to using any pesticides, plants should always be monitored for the degree of infestation and a sensible control measure considered.

** A pesticide is a substance that kills, or attempts to kill, a particular pest, e.g.* ***insect****icide,* ***fung****icide,* ***herb****icide, etc.*

**E-1-36 DWM reviewed RT 1/03**

**-continued-**

## IPM Considerations

Adults feed on a wide range of host plants, but the larvae cause the most serious injury. Scouting is essential. One drench per growing season may be adequate for container plants. Birds are good predators.

A majority of the plant materials affected by the weevil are broadleafed evergreens. Normally, foliage remains on a plant for two years. Once control has been effected, newly-developed foliage should be free of notched damage. The plant must go through two years of protection, however, before it is free of old "battle scars."

## Control

Pitfall traps or beating sheets can help monitor adult weevil activity. Entomophagous (insect eating) nematodes may be used for the soil dwelling stage (larvae) when larvae are present.

Chemical pesticides are available. If you choose to use chemical pesticides, contact your local Cooperative Extension office for specific recommendations. If using chemicals, note that some populations may be resistant to organophosphorus insecticides.

Spray foliage and surface at three-week intervals beginning in early May, 148 – 400 GDD and at three-week intervals for the rest of the growing season.

## Do not use a hose-end sprayer!

Hose-end sprayers do not dissolve, mix or apply pesticides accurately or evenly. The changing rates of water pressure, different hose diameters and water temperature provide variables that prevent accurate mixing and delivery. A hand pump or powered tank sprayer, where the pesticide is pre-mixed to the proper dilution, allows for the application of a known mixture as per label instructions.

WHENEVER YOU USE A PESTICIDE, ALWAYS READ THE LABEL AND FOLLOW THE MANUFACTURER'S INSTRUCTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.