

Life cycle

Squash vine borers overwinter as pupae in the soil. They emerge as moths in late June and July, when 1000 DD₅₀ (degree days) have been reached. (For an explanation of how to calculate degree days, see page 14 in *Growing Pumpkins and Other Vine Crops in Wisconsin* (A3688) at www.uwex.edu/ces/pubs). This coincides with full bloom of the common roadside weed chicory. Female moths lay small, brown eggs at the base of plants. When the eggs hatch 7–10 days later, the larvae immediately begin burrowing into the vines where they feed for 14–30 days. As the larvae feed, they leave behind the characteristic light brown frass that resembles sawdust. Fully grown larvae leave the plant to pupate. Squash vine borers produce one generation per year.

It is important to treat plants in which runners are less than 2 feet long. Larvae boring into the main stem will kill the entire plant while those boring into a runner will only kill the runner and not cause economic damage in larger plants.

Floating row covers may also be used during the flight period of the adults to prevent egg-laying on susceptible plants. Keep in mind that plants in bloom need bees to pollinate the flowers. Remove row covers to allow the bees access. For a list of pesticides that will control squash vine borers, refer to the University of Wisconsin–Extension publication *Commercial Vegetable Production in Wisconsin* (A3422).

Control

Monitor pumpkin and squash plants when 900DD₅₀ have accumulated. Currently there are no treatment thresholds for the squash vine borer. Two to 3 insecticide treatments, 5–7 days apart during the 3-week egg-laying period around 1000DD₅₀ will control most of the larval borers before they become protected by the vines.

Author: K. A. Delahaut is an outreach specialist with the Integrated Pest Management Program at the University of Wisconsin–Madison and the University of Wisconsin–Extension, Cooperative Extension.

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