IMPORTED CABBAGEWORM IN HOME GARDENS
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Description: The caterpillar stage is velvety green with faint yellow longitudinal stripes and many fine hairs; up to 1 and 1/4 inches long. Adult is a white butterfly with black spots on the wings. The pale eggs are attached to underside of leaves.

Common Host Plant(s): Cabbage, cauliflower, collards, Brussels sprouts, mustard, turnip and kale.

Damage: Feeds on underside of leaves, producing ragged holes; bores into heads. Cabbage can recover in some cases after caterpillars are removed.

Distribution: Throughout Virginia.

Lifecycle: Imported cabbageworms overwinter in plant debris as pupae. The time span from egg to adult moth is about four to five weeks. Multiple generations occur annually in Virginia.

Control: All controls work best if applied before the caterpillars grow longer than 1/2 inch long.

Cultural Control: Handpick caterpillars where found. Conduct thorough postharvest cleanup in gardens where the imported cabbageworm has been a problem in the previous year.

Organic/Biological Control: Bacillus thuringiensis, or Bt, (Bactur, Dipel, SOK BT, Thuricide) 2.0 to 3.0 tbsp. in 1 gallon water. It is not necessary to wait before harvesting after an application of Bt. A parasitic wasp, Trichogramma sp., attacks imported cabbageworm eggs; mass releases of Trichogramma sp. may be successful in reducing pest populations. Several other parasites attack pupae and larvae of the imported cabbageworm. The braconid wasp Apanteles glomeratus is most effective. The imported cabbageworm is also susceptible to attacked predatory stinkbugs and Paper wasps. Natural control by viruses and bacterial diseases occurs as well.

Chemical Control: Treat with a registered insecticide every 4 days after first true leaves appear until harvest if worms are still present. Direct insecticides to the undersides of leaves.