

## **WHAT'S IN THIS REPORT?**

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## **IPM TEAM REPORTS**

The Morris County Rutgers Master Gardener Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Team scouts one or more community gardens each week. Every other week the team provides IPM Team reports on problems first observed during the two-week period. These reports contain summary descriptions, management methods, and research-based references for more information. Refer to Rutgers Fact Sheet 1123 and 1124 for all recommended controls for insect and disease pests. They are valuable resources throughout the growing season:

[Rutgers Fact Sheet FS1123 Vegetable Insect Control](#)      [Rutgers Fact Sheet FS1124 Vegetable Disease Control](#)

The gardens scouted by the IPM Team include the Morris County Park Commission Community Garden, the Morris Township Ted Largman Community Garden, the Madison Community Garden, the Wick Garden in Jockey Hollow National Park, the Randolph Community Garden, and the Washington Township Community Garden. The team also reports on sightings in the Pequannock Community Garden and their own vegetable gardens.

## **NEWS**

IPM Team Reports are now available on the Rutgers Morris County Master Gardener website:  
<https://morris.njaes.rutgers.edu/master-gardeners/> Scroll to the bottom of the page to view the reports.

On the website, you can also now subscribe to the IPM Team Reports. When you subscribe, you will be sent a confirmation email that you need to respond to. If you don't see the confirmation email, check your spam.

## **GENERAL OBSERVATIONS and TIPS**

### **GENERAL OBSERVATIONS**

Once again the spring season started with erratic temperatures. On April 21<sup>st</sup>, after several unseasonably warm days the week before, temperatures went down to the mid-20 degrees. The freeze damaged some asparagus spears, strawberry blossoms, rhubarb, and other emerging perennial plants. Orchards in bloom were especially hard hit. Despite damage from the cold, surviving buds are beginning to fruit. Rhubarb, asparagus, chives, and other early perennials are already producing. Over-wintered crops may have produced a nice spring bonus.

Some spring harvest:



Figure 1: Overwintered carrots. Photo: M. Sample, NJAES



Figure 2: Chives. Photo: M. Sample, NJAES



Figure 3: Asparagus. Photo: M. Albright, NJAES



Figure 4: Spring greens, Photo: M. Albright, NJAES



Figure 5: May transplants. Photo: M. Sample, NJAES

May is a busy month in the garden. Before planting take the time to evaluate your plot, especially the soil. Healthy soil with good texture helps produce healthy crops. Consider a soil test especially if you had issues last year. Add compost if you have it. Consider permanent or semi-permanent paths to avoid compression of the soil due to foot traffic. After planting try to keep soil covered as much as possible by growing plants and/or mulch. When deciding what and how much to plant, remember that more isn't always better. It's tempting to plant a community garden plot densely in an effort to maximize yield. However, planting too densely can backfire. Plants need proper spacing for adequate air circulation and access to nutrients.

Late May and early June are prime planting times for many summer crops in our area. Seedlings of summer crops like tomatoes and peppers are generally best planted in late May or early June. The average last frost in Morris County is around mid-May. Of course, that's no guarantee that there won't be a frost later. If you plant tender annuals like tomatoes or peppers, keep an eye on the forecast

and give plants some protection if cold weather is predicted. Don't forget to harden off your seedlings before planting them outside to give them a good start at thriving. It's also time to direct sow your first bean seeds and many others summer vegetables. Refer to seed packages, reputable seed company websites or catalogs, and educational websites for proper planting times and spacing if you're not sure. Check early and often for the start of any pest or disease issues when they can be more easily managed.

We wish you a productive garden.

## TIP: SEED TAPES - WORTH A TRY

Many plots are beginning to fill in with a wonderful variety of transplants and direct sowed seeds, but there's another option that may be fun for you to experiment with.

Seed tapes have been on the market for many years, but now the variety of choices available in packets makes for easy sowing of beets, carrots, lettuces, even flowers and herbs. Aside from convenience and time savings, the advantages to growing from seed tapes are each seed is spaced for optimal growth and small seeds aren't misplaced. Tapes can be arranged in plots and there are even discs available for containers. For those who enjoy do-it-yourself projects, there are online resources (see some representative links below) detailing how seed tapes can be assembled using readily available materials and seed varieties of your choice. This could even be done as a fun family project.

So many seeds, so little time.

Seed Tape Resources:

[Kansas State Extension Prepare Seeds With Seed Tape](#)  
[University of Missouri Extension Making Seed Tapes](#)

## UPDATES

The first IPM Team Report of this season, April 20, had write-ups on several problems to watch out for. All of those problems have now been observed:

- Flea beetles: May 4
- Allium leaf miners: egg laying and feeding marks May 4, larvae tunnels May 11
- White grubs: April 24

See the report for more information on those pests: [Rutgers Master Gardeners of Morris County Community Garden IPM Team Report#1, April 20,2026/](#)

Problems now observed:



Figure 8: Flea beetle. Photo: L. Terraneo, NJAES



Figure 9: Allium leaf miner feeding and egg laying marks. Photo: M.



Figure 10: White Grubs. Photo: Rutgers Fact Sheet



Figure 6: Various seed tapes ready to plant. Note the difference in seed sizes.

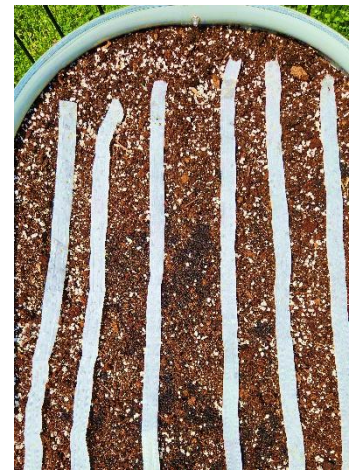


Figure 7: Seed tapes are spaced in raised bed. This group includes root crops of radish and beet, with center tapes of lettuces. Photos: J. Basile, NJAES

Additional lifecycle stages seen:

- Eggs of Imported Cabbageworm butterflies: May 11. For more information see [Rutgers Master Gardeners of Morris County Community Garden IPM Team Report#1, April 20,2026/](#)



Figure 11: Egg of imported cabbageworm. Eggs are laid singly on the back of leaves. They are small but visible and can be hand removed. Photo: L. Terraneo, NJAES

## REPORTS ON NEW PROBLEMS

### **Problem: Common Asparagus Beetle (*Crioceris asparagi*)**

**Where:** Morris Township Community Garden May 4, Wick Garden May 7

**Description:** The Common Asparagus beetle is 1/4 inch long, slender, and blue-black in color with three, yellowish-white squares on each wing cover. Asparagus beetle adults feed on young shoots during the harvest season, chew holes in the shoots, and lay small, dark brown eggs standing on end on the spears.

There is also a Spotted Asparagus Beetle but they are usually active later in the season (mid-May).



Figure 12: Common asparagus beetle adult (1/4 inch long). Photo: J. Basile, NJAES



Figure 13: Asparagus beetle eggs Photo: Univ. of Maryland



Figure 14: Close up of asparagus beetle eggs. The eggs will hatch in a week and feed for two. Photo: J. Basile, NJAES



Figure 15: Asparagus beetle larvae (1/3 inch long when fully grown). Photo: University of Minnesota



Figure 16: Asparagus beetles can be found feeding within spears, disfiguring, and destroying crops. Fast removal of eggs will help prevent damage and additional generations. Photo: J. Basile, NJAES

**Management:**

- Hand pick any existing beetles, larvae and eggs and destroy them.
- Asparagus in the affected area should be harvested daily.
- The best time to check for asparagus beetles is in the afternoon when they are most active.
- Organic insecticides include neem, pyrethrin, and spinosad. Be sure to read the label, make sure asparagus beetles are included, and follow the directions.

**References:**

- Rutgers University: [FS221: Asparagus Beetles \(Rutgers NJAES\)](https://extension.rutgers.edu/vegetable/2012/05/01/asparagus-beetles/)
- University of Minnesota: <https://extension.umn.edu/yard-and-garden-insects/asparagus-beetles>

**Problem: Leaf miners (multiple species)**

**Where:** Morris Township Community Garden May 4

**Description:** Leaf miners lay eggs that hatch within a week, and the larvae burrow immediately into the leaf. They feed on the leaf tissue for nearly 12 days forming “mines” and then fall to the soil and pupate. Nearly three weeks later, the next generation of flies will hatch, and the cycle begins anew. Crops most affected are spinach, Swiss chard, beets, and lambsquarter.



Figure 17: Leaf miner eggs (about 1/4 inch long). Photo: L. Terraneo, NJAES



Figure 18: Leaf miner tunnel in spinach leaf Photo: L. Terraneo NJAES



Figure 19: Extensive leaf miner tunnel damage to spinach leaf. Photo: L. Terraneo, NJAES



Figure 20: Leaf miner larvae inside leaf tissue. Photo: L. Terraneo, NJAES

**Management:**

- Inspect plant leaves for small leaf miner eggs and remove them. The eggs are often on the undersides of leaves.
- Remove affected leaves to help decrease the impact of subsequent generations of leaf miners. There are three to four generations per year.
- Remove nearby weeds as these may harbor leaf miners. Keep the garden clean.

- Rotate crops as pupae may overwinter in soil.
- Thorough cleanup of debris in the fall.
- Spinosad and neem oil may help prevent egg laying but will not kill the larvae that are already in leaves. Timing is critical, scout your plants for eggs.
- Row covers can be effective

**References:**

- Rutgers University [Spinach Leafminer \(Rutgers NJAES\)](#)

**Problem: Four-lined Plant Bug (*Poecilocapsus lineatus*)**

**Where:** Pequannock Community Garden May 6, nymphs

**Description:** The adult four-lined plant bug is a 1/2 inch long, yellowish to yellowish-green true bug with four longitudinal black lines down the wing covers and black antennae. Nymphs of the insect are wingless and bright yellow to red with rows of black spots on the abdomen. Older nymphs are yellowish-green with a yellow stripe on each wing pad. Four-lined plant bugs overwinter as eggs in plant debris. There is only one generation per year.

These bugs feed on a variety of plants, including herbs (especially members of the mint family and basil), peppers, potatoes, currants and gooseberries, and many ornamentals. The damage inflicted by their sucking mouth parts can at first appear to be a fungus or other sooty disease, but close inspection reveals mechanical damage, with the injury going all the way through the leaf, not just resting on one surface. In great numbers, they can disfigure the plant and reduce its vitality. Their damage makes herbs appear unappetizing.



Figure 21: Nymphs of four-lined plant bugs. Photo: Terraneo, NJAES



Figure 22: Four lined plant bug adult. Photo: L. Terraneo, NJAES



Figure 23: Four lined plant bug nymph and characteristic feeding damage. Photo: J. Basile, NJAES

**Management:**

- Begin monitoring in early May for signs of feeding (leaf damage).
- Hand-pick (although bugs are fast).
- Insecticidal soap can be used on edible plants and ornamentals.

**References:**

- University of Wisconsin-Madison: [Four-Lined Plant Bug – Wisconsin Horticulture](#)
- Ohio State University: [Four-lined Plant Bug Crushing Oregano \(and other plants\) | BYGL](#)
- University of Minnesota: [Fourlined plant bugs | UMN Extension](#)

**Problem: Spittlebug (*Cercopidae spp.*)**

**Where:** Morris County Community Garden May 11

**Description:** According to the University of Connecticut, spittlebugs are common and easily recognized by the white foamy ‘spittle’ produced by the nymph or immature stage of the insects as they feed. Adults are less commonly seen but are known as froghoppers (close relatives of leafhoppers, etc). There are anywhere from 30 to 60+ spittlebug species in the United States. All feed on plants, including both woody and herbaceous types. Some spittlebugs have broad host ranges and others narrow. There is usually only one generation per year and most overwinter in the egg stage inside overwintering plant tissue where they were deposited by the females in mid to late summer to early fall, depending on species. Hatch occurs in the spring, probably in May. Even though Spittlebugs feed by extracting plant sap/juice through needle-like mouth parts, they seldom cause notable injury to the plant. There are a few exceptions including the meadow spittlebug (*Philaenus spumarius*) and the pine spittlebug (*Aphrophora cribrata*).



Figure 24: White foam from spittlebug.  
Photo: M. Albright, NJAES



Figure 25: Adult meadow spittlebug. Photo:  
Cheryl Moorehead, Bugwood.org/UCONN Edu

**Management:** Spittlebugs are unlikely to cause significant damage to either vegetables or ornamentals. According to UConn, “the biggest problem with spittlebugs in the garden, whether it’s an ornamental or food garden, is the unsightliness of the spittle masses. Spittle and nymphs can both be washed off the plants with a steady stream of water. Normally, no chemical controls are recommended, and the spittle protects nymphs from contact insecticides. Not sure if there are enough spittlebugs to cause plants to be weakened? Look for distorted or stunted new growth, and of course numerous spittle masses on the same plant.”

**References:**

- UConn Extension, Spittlebug: A Unique Little Insect: [Spittlebug: A Unique Little Insect | UConn Extension Bug Week | College of Agriculture, Health and Natural Resources | University of Connecticut](#)

**Problem: Cold damage to asparagus**

**Where:** Madison Community Garden April 8-9, Morris Township Community Garden and Morris Township home garden April 21

**Description:** Asparagus spears can be damaged by temperatures below 28 degrees Fahrenheit. Asparagus can tolerate a light frost, but not lower temperatures. The effect of freezing will cause the spears to become limp, and eventually turn brown and mushy. Once damaged the spear will not grow.



Figure 26: Multiple asparagus spears damaged by cold. Photo: B. Monaghan, NJAES



Figure 27: Cold damage to an asparagus spear. Once damaged, a spear will not grow. Photo: B. Monaghan, NJAES

**Management:**

- Cut the affected spears to the ground and wait for new shoots to sprout. Normally one should see new growth in 7-10 days.
- To prevent freezing cover the plants with heavy duty plastic sheets, burlap, or buckets before the temperature drops.

**References:**

- Rutgers University: [Diagnosing Spear Damage in Asparagus — Plant & Pest Advisory](#)

**Problem: Cold damage to strawberry blossoms**

**Where:** Morris Township Community Garden April 21

**Description:** Open strawberry blossoms can be damaged by freezing temperatures and frost. Blossoms with damage have black centers and will not develop berries. Blossoms with partial damage will develop misshapen berries. Blossoms that are not open will survive and not be affected. Normal strawberry blossoms have yellow centers.



Figure 28: Strawberry flowers with black centers have frost / freeze damage. Photo: M. Albright, NJAES



Figure 29: Flowers with yellow centers are healthy. Photo: M. Albright, NJAES



Figure 30: Misshapen strawberries resulting from partial damage by frost or freeze. Photo: Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

**Management:** Frosts can occur when temperatures drop to 36°F so protect open strawberry flowers when temperatures of 36°F or below are forecasted. Cover strawberry plantings with row covers or light cloth. Remove the covers during the day after temperatures warm up to allow for insect pollination.

**References**

- Rutgers University Fact Sheet FS097: [FS097: Growing Strawberries in the Home Garden \(Rutgers NJAES\)](#)

**WEED SPOTLIGHT**

**Weed: Lesser Celandine (*Ficaria verna*, previously named *Ranunculus ficaria*)**

**Description:** Lesser celandine, an invasive non-native ephemeral, is one of the earliest spring blooming plants. Blooming occurs in March and April. It grows in low mounds of 3 to 5 inches and displays bright yellow flowers of 7 or more petals. The flowers measure about an inch in diameter. Its leaves are shiny, heart shaped, and dark green. This spring ephemeral spreads vegetatively by bulblets found at the base of the stems and tuberous roots. Seeds are also produced. Given moist rich soil, lesser celandine will grow aggressively in sun or shade. It easily out-competes native spring ephemerals.



Figure 31: Detail of lesser celandine flowers Photo J. Carlson, NJAES



Figure 32: Lesser celandine leaves Photo: J. Carlson,



Figure 33: Close-up of lesser celandine bulblets and tubers Photo B. Monaghan, NJAES

**Management:** Controlling lesser celandine colonies in the vegetable garden can be done by hand digging, though time and effort will be needed to remove all the bulblets and tubers. They should be bagged and disposed in the trash. The best time to do this is in the early spring when the plant is emerging and the flowers and leaves are visible. By the time most trees have leafed out, lesser celandine has vanished and the plant is dormant until next spring.

**References:**

- Penn State Extension: [Lesser Celandine](#)
- UMD Extension: [Lesser Celandine | University of Maryland Extension](#)
- OSU Extension: [Lesser Celandine: An Aggressive Non-Native Spring Ephemeral | BYGL](#)

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

**All Rutgers Gardening and Landscaping Fact Sheets & Bulletins** [Publications Category \(Rutgers NJAES\)](#)  
**Rutgers Master Gardener Program** [Rutgers Master Gardener Program | Rutgers Cooperative Extension](#)  
**Rutgers Soil Testing Laboratory** [Soil Testing Laboratory | Rutgers Cooperative Extension](#)  
**Community Gardening Series** [Community Gardening Series | Rutgers Cooperative Extension](#)  
**Office of the New Jersey State Climatologist** [Office of the New Jersey State Climatologist](#)  
**Rutgers New Jersey Weather Network** [Office of the New Jersey State Climatologist](#)  
**Ticks and Tick-borne Disease** [Ticks and Tick-borne Disease | Rutgers Cooperative Extension](#)  
**Rutgers NJAES You Tube Channel** [Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station - YouTube](#)

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