

# Tobacco Budworm

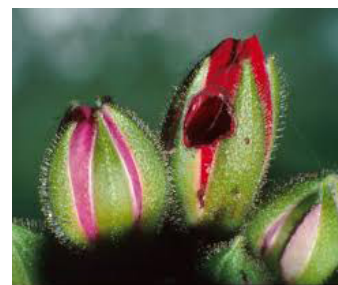
Hey! My Geraniums and Petunias stopped blooming! What's going on?



The Tobacco Budworm moths emerge from overwintering pupae from March through May and lay eggs on a variety of garden ornamentals: Petunia, Geranium, Nicotiana, and snapdragon most notably. Corn Earworms, which have a similar appearance, will target corn and lettuce.

The larvae are predominantly yellow green but have the ability to take on the hue of whatever flower they happen to be eating. This camouflage is so good, that they are usually not noticed until the affected plant is no longer blooming.

Closer examination reveals holes drilled in the buds where the larvae entered to eat the petals. As the caterpillars grow, dark specks of frass and feces are seen on leaf surfaces below the buds. Larger larvae begin to feed on foliage as well as seed capsules once the buds are empty.



Caterpillars can be controlled by handpicking or by natural predators such as the egg parasitizing Trichogramma wasp. Other insects that eat the eggs and small larvae are the minute pirate bug and bigeyed bug. If spraying is necessary, an organic control such as **Monterey Bt Caterpillar Killer** is recommended. Spinosad products such as **Bonide Captain Jack's** could also be used but will harm beneficial insects and can only be applied 3x a season to the same crop or plant. Spinosad is especially harmful to syrphid fly larvae that help control corn earworm eggs and small larvae on lettuce.

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