

Apple Maggots

Apple maggot flies resemble the common housefly, but differ in that they have a white spot on their back and black “F” shaped bands on their translucent wings. They are probably the most destructive pest to apple trees grown in home gardens in the Puget Sound area.

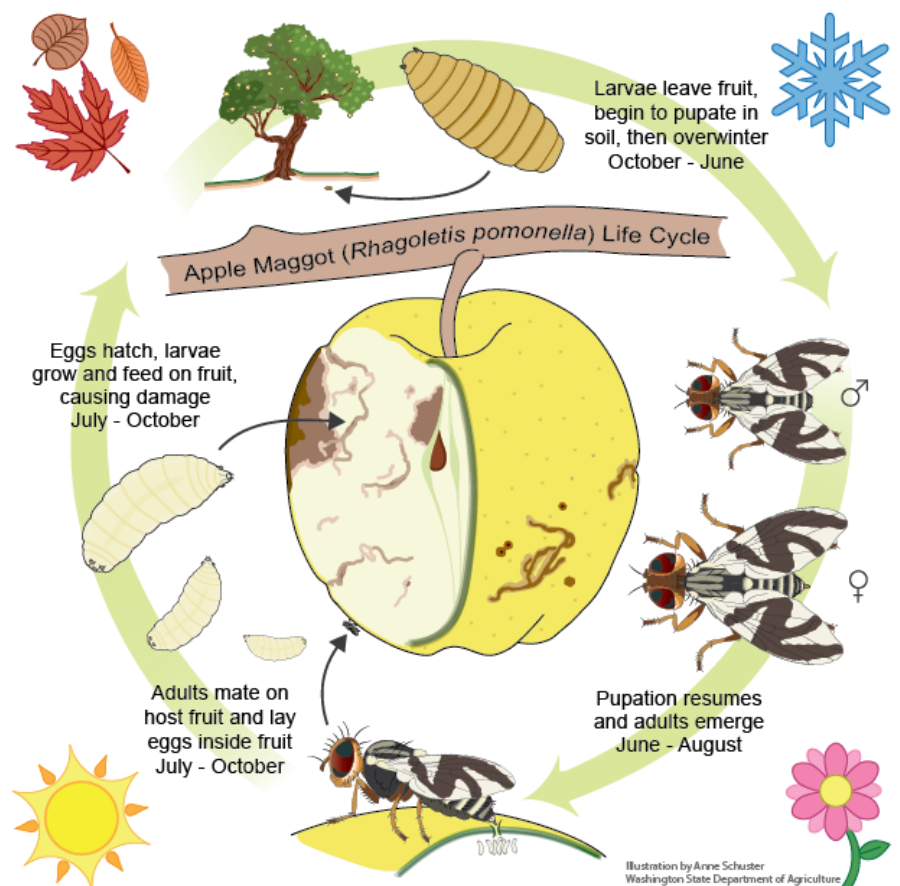
Lifecycle

Apple maggots spend the winter in the ground as non-feeding pupae. They begin to emerge from the soil as small flies starting in June or July. Once they surface, apple maggots travel from tree to tree where adult females start to lay eggs beneath the skin of the apple. Eggs hatch in about 5 to 10 days, releasing cream-colored, legless maggots that feed and tunnel in the flesh of the fruit. The fly is in the larvae stage for 3 to 4 weeks and usually finishes its development once the apples fall to the ground. They then exit the fruit and burrow into the soil where they remain until the following summer.

Methods of Control

There are several methods of controlling apple maggots and when several techniques are used simultaneously, your chances of reducing apple maggot damage greatly increases.

- 1) Clean up under your fruit trees. The first line of defense is preventing as many adults from hatching in the summer as possible by making sanitation a priority. Always pick up and dispose of apples within a few days after they fall from the tree in order to reduce the number of pupae that reach the ground.



Dispose of apples by collecting them in plastic bags and throwing them away, or feeding them to livestock. Do **not** compost them.

- 2) Trapping adult flies with sticky traps is another control method. Commercially available sticky traps or homemade traps are both equally effective. To make your own, purchase round red spheres (old Christmas ornaments work!) about the size of an apple (or use actual apples). Coat the sphere completely with a sticky product called Tanglefoot®. (Tip: If you're wanting to reuse the sphere, first wrap it with cellophane before applying the Tanglefoot® for easy clean up.) The adult flies are attracted to and become trapped on the sticky sphere when they land to lay their eggs. The more traps per tree, the greater the odds of trapping most of these pests. Three traps are suggested per tree at a minimum. Used in combination with flat, yellow sticky traps are the most very effective trapping control.
- 3) Another barrier method uses Kaolin clay which forms a barrier film that prevents the insect from penetrating the fruit. Insect pests avoid the kaolin-treated trees. It is important to build up a proper covering of clay with multiple applications of the spray on your trees or it will not be effective. (see the reference link below for more details)
- 4) Nylon footies can be placed over each apple when they are about the size of a quarter or no later than June 1st, which is about the time apple maggot emerge. It is important to tightly secure footie around the apple stem.



Pesticides labeled for apple maggot control are also available, but may pose more of a threat to beneficial wildlife in your garden and are not recommended.

Additional reading:

WSU pamphlet #EB1928E Protecting Backyard Apple Trees from Apple Maggots
<https://pubs.extension.wsu.edu/protecting-backyard-apple-trees-from-apple-maggots>

Hortsense—Apple Maggot Fact Sheet

<https://hortsense.cahnrs.wsu.edu/fact-sheet/apple-apple-maggot/>

Use of kaolin clay—Philadelphia Orchard Project

<https://www.phillyorchards.org/2015/05/04/kaolin-clay-sprays-for-fruit-trees/>



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