

Beware of the Bagrada Bug

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November 2013*

Question:

I have heard about an important pest that may impact the Central Coast farms and nurseries called the Bagrada bug. What is it?

Answer:

Damage caused by the Bagrada bug, also called painted bug (*Bagrada hilaris*), has resulted in devastating crop losses for some California growers. This plant-feeding stink bug infests wild mustard, a common weed in California in late winter to early spring. Record numbers of bugs have invaded newly planted cole crops after the mustard weeds dry out in late summer. The heaviest pest damage has occurred in organic vegetables. The Bagrada bug has also become a major problem in nurseries where bedding plants, plugs, and transplants are produced, attacking young vegetable and ornamental plants in the mustard family Brassicaceae (Cruciferae).

Question:

Where is it found?

Answer:

The Bagrada bug is native to Africa and has spread to India, Pakistan, parts of Southeast Asia, and Italy. In the United States, it was first found in Los Angeles County in 2008. By 2011, the pest had disseminated throughout Southern California to San Diego, Imperial, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino and Ventura counties. In September 2012, the pest moved northward to Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo counties. In August 2013 it was detected in Monterey Co. Other states where this pest is currently found are Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, Utah and possibly Texas.

Question:

What is the regulatory status?

Answer:

The Bagrada bug is regulated as an organism of known economic importance in state quarantine programs. It currently has a B rating by the California Department of Food and Agriculture. This means that the pest is subject to eradication, containment, control, or other holding action at the discretion of the individual county agricultural commissioner. When found in the nursery, it is subject to state-endorsed holding action and eradication. Strict monitoring of outbound plants is required to prevent pest spread through the movement of plant material. Since the Bagrada bug can be found incidentally on a broad range of plant species, extensive crop monitoring for this pest in nurseries is necessary.

Question:

Where can I get more information?

Answer:

See “Bagrada Bug” (Pest Alert) and “Management of the Bagrada Bug in Nurseries”, which this information was excerpted. They can be downloaded at:

<http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/pestalet/pabagradabug.html>