

Cutworms

The Problem: Cutworm larvae eat tender sprouts and plant shoots. They ruin a crop before it has a chance to get started.

Identification

- Appearance — The adult cutworm moth may look like just another innocent insect, flying around minding its own business. It's actually hunting for a place to lay its eggs. The larvae you may never see, but you'll definitely see the damage they do.



- Signs of damage: The telltale sign of a cutworm is a seedling stem that has been clipped off close to the soil surface. Usually the top part of the plant is left untouched, lying by the chewed-off stem. Cutworms eat all garden vegetables and they like flowers, as well. Cutworms especially like tender seedlings and young transplants. Spring plantings suffer the greatest damage. Some cutworms climb up plants to feed on buds, shoots and foliage. Leaf damage such as holes or ragged edges could be confused with slug damage, but if there is no slime trail, you may be dealing with cutworms.

Controls

- Controlling weeds, grasses and plant debris both in and around the garden is an important preventive step because it reduces habitat and food favored by cutworms. Tilling the garden in early spring and fall can help kill cutworms or pupae or expose them to the weather and to predators such as birds.
- One way to keep cutworms from destroying your seedlings is to create a barrier to keep cutworms out. Use [row covers](#) over or [cardboard collars](#) (think toilet paper rolls) around transplants. Be sure the barrier extends into the soil to keep burrowing worms out.
- Another approach is the use of [Bacillus thuringiensis](#) (Bt), a naturally occurring bacterium that target many caterpillar-type pests. It can be an effective and environmentally friendly way to treat cutworms in the garden.
- [Parasitic nematodes](#) are also effective against the larvae in their early stages below the soil line.

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Read more at Gardening Know How: How To Get Rid Of Cutworms – Dealing With Cutworm Damage <https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/plant-problems/pests/insects/get-rid-cutworms.htm>