



# LEAF MINER

**L**ead miners are tiny, grayish-brown flies that lay their eggs in little white rows on the undersides of the leaves of members of the spinach family (like chard, beets and spinach). Don't be deceived by their size—they may be small, but if left unattended, they can do a large amount of damage to the leaves of your plants, and can even destroy whole plants if the plants are young enough.

When they hatch in mid-spring, the leaf miner maggots create tunnels as they feed on the soft inner tissue of the leaves. As a result, you will be able to see blotchy, irregular spots on the affected leaves. If you look closely at these leaves, you may be able to pick out the pale-green maggot, measuring up to only about 1/8 of an inch in length. The maggots will tunnel through the leaves for 1 to 3 weeks, and then will bury in the soil to pupate.

Have you noticed any of the trademark signs of leaf miner presence in your own garden? If so, there are a couple of things you can do to cope with it. To prevent further damage, check on the undersides of the leaves of your plants for the tiny white egg clusters and squish them with your fingers. An effective method to control the damage done by leaf miners is to snip off the affected leaves and to destroy them immediately afterwards.

You can also cover any susceptible plants with a light row cover in early spring (when the leaf miner flies start to lay their eggs) to prevent the adults from getting to your veggies!



*Clockwise from top: Leaf miner damage to Swiss chard plant, leaf miner eggs on Swiss chard leaf*

## IN THE GP LENDING LIBRARY

Garden Insects of North America: The Ultimate Guide to Backyard Bugs | Whitney Crenshaw

The Organic Gardener's Handbook of Natural Pest and Disease Control | Jeff Ball