

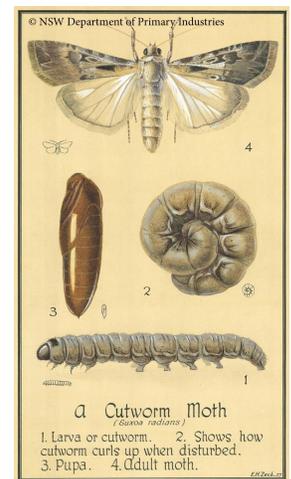
CUTWORMS

These are very destructive garden pests. Cutworms are the caterpillars of several varieties of moth and range in color from dark gray, to pink, to dull green or brown. They can be spotted or striped, but they all curl into a tight circle when disturbed. Most cutworms live in the top inch of the soil, usually within 5 inches of the plants they feed off. They encircle seedlings and young plants and chop them down like mini lumberjacks. It's infuriating to find previously healthy plants laying on the ground, cut off just above soil level. Only regular maintenance will keep this kind of damage to a minimum.

Cutworms are most active during the night so early evening is the easiest time to hunt them down and destroy them. Working from one end of the raised bed to the other, gently run your hands over the soil immediately around each plant. Try to turn over the soil in a circular motion, moving outwards to the edge of each square.

Either drop the cutworms into a container of dish soap and water or crush them underfoot. The caterpillars are with us for the whole growing season, but they are at their most greedy in the spring and early summer.

Planting seedlings inside cardboard tubes or small paper cups (bottom removed) is an effective preventative measure. Be sure to bury the tube or cup at least two inches below the soil to stop the cutworm from burrowing under. Some gardeners wrap a collar of aluminum foil around their plant, again taking care to bury it 2 inches deep. One advantage of using foil is that as the plant grows, the collar can be enlarged to give the stem more room.



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

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MotherEarthNews.com: Eliminate Cutworms Using Natural Pest Control

Toxic Free NC: Organic Solutions for Cutworms