



*Wm. Wheat & Son*

**FLORIST & GARDEN CENTRE**

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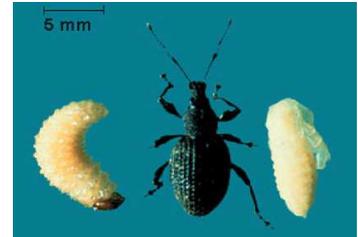
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**Gardeners Guide to:**



### **Vine weevil (*Otiorhynchus sulcatus*)**

Plants growing in pots or other containers, in the open or under cover, can be severely affected by vine weevil grubs. In the open ground damage is less likely although the grubs sometimes cause damage, particularly to strawberries, primulas, polyanthus, Sedum, Heuchera and young yew plants. The adult beetles feed on the foliage of many herbaceous plants and shrubs, especially Rhododendron, evergreen Euonymus, Hydrangea, Epimedium, Bergenia, Primula and strawberry.



**Symptoms** Irregular-shaped notches are eaten in leaf margins by the adult weevils during the summer. Plants wilt and die during autumn to spring as a result of grubs devouring the roots.

**Cause:** Adult vine weevils are responsible for the leaf damage which can be unsightly but rarely affects the plant's growth. The adults are 9mm long, dull black beetles with a pear-shaped body when viewed from above. Adult weevils may be seen on the foliage at night; during the day they hide in dark places. They are slow moving insects that cannot fly but they are very persistent crawlers and climbers.

**Vine weevil grubs** - Far more serious is the damage caused by the soil-dwelling larvae which are plump, white, legless grubs up to 1cm (0.5in) long with pale brown heads. These feed on roots and also bore into tubers and succulent stem bases, devastating many herbaceous pot plants. They also kill woody plants by gnawing away the outer tissues of the larger roots and stem bases.

#### **Non-chemical control**

- On mild spring or summer evenings inspect plants and walls by torchlight and pick off the adult weevils. Shake shrubs over an upturned umbrella to dislodge and collect more. In glasshouses, look under pots or on the underside of staging where the beetles hide during the day.
- Trap adults with sticky barriers, such as Agralan Insect Barrier Glue, around pots or glasshouse staging.
- Encourage natural enemies. Vine weevils and their grubs are eaten by a variety of predators such as birds, frogs, toads, shrews, hedgehogs and predatory ground beetles.
- A predator of the larvae is available as a microscopic pathogenic nematode (*Steinernema kraussei*) from **'Just Green Ltd'**- suppliers of biological controls (Available to order from the garden centre). Apply in August or early September when the soil temperature is warm enough for the nematode to be effective (5-20°C/41-68°F) and before the vine weevil grubs have grown large enough to cause damage. Another nematode, *Heterorhabditis megidis* is also available but is more temperature-dependant (12-20°C/ 54-68°F). These nematodes can also be applied to garden soil but gives poor results in dry or heavy soils. They works best in open potting composts such as peat or coir.

**Chemical control** Levington Plant Protection Composts are premixed with slow-release granules of the pesticide imidacloprid and will control larvae for up to 12 months. It is best used for potting up seedlings, plug plants, cuttings and tubers of cyclamen and begonia. When repotting older plants, wash the old compost off the roots or it will provide a haven for the grubs. A better option for established pot plants is to apply one of the nematodes (see above) or thiacloprid as a liquid drench (Bio Provado Vine Weevil Killer 2). This insecticide gives protection against the grubs for up to four months, but treatment in mid- to late summer will control the young larvae and prevent damage occurring later in the autumn to spring period. Both products are for use on ornamental plants in containers only.

**Warning:** Gardeners with vine weevil should keep up their guard because stopping treatment after the apparent disappearance of the pest can allow numbers to build up again.

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