

Stink Bugs

Hemiptera: Pentatomidae, *Euschistus servus* (Say) and *Acrosternum hilare* (Say)

By Eric R. Day and Tom Kuhar*

Range and Plants Attacked

This pest is found throughout Virginia but is more abundant in the warmer regions of the state. It is found on a wide variety of host plants, doing the most damage on tomato, pepper, bean, okra, pecan, and fruit crops.

Description of Damage

Adults and nymphs suck sap, feeding primarily on buds and seedpods. This feeding results in weakened plants and malformed buds and fruit. On okra and bean pods, the damage appears as pimples or wart-like growths. On tomatoes and peppers, white marks, often resembling halos, appear on the fruit. On pecans and beans, the damage shows up as brown spots on the nutmeat or seed. On some tree fruit, stink bugs can cause a deforming condition called cat facing on the fruit.

Identification

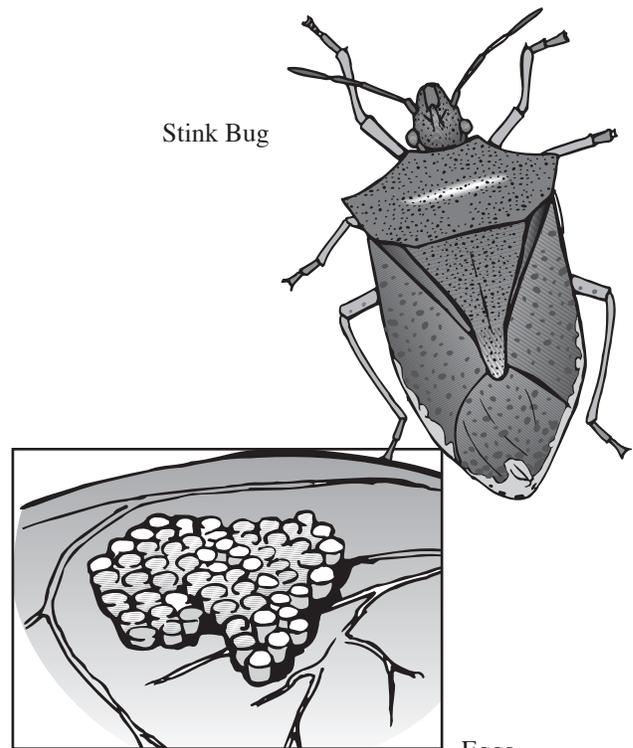
Stink bugs belong to the order Hemiptera, and family Pentatomidae. Several different species are found in Virginia. Two of the most important pest species are the brown stink bug, *Euschistus servus* (Say), and the green stink bug, *Acrosternum hilare* (Say). All stink bugs have the characteristic five-sided shield shape. Brown stink bug adults are 5/8 inch long, grayish brown on top, and yellowish on the ventral surface. Green stink bugs are 5/8 inch long and largely a uniform green color. Eggs of both species are barrel shaped and laid in clusters of 20 to 70. Nymphs resemble adults in shape but are smaller and have contrasting color patterns. Stink bugs discharge a foul odor.

Life History

There are one to two generations of stink bugs each year. They typically overwinter as adults and begin to lay eggs on leaves of plants in late spring or early summer (see below). Nymphs feed throughout the summer and molt to adults in late summer.

Cultural Control

Controlling weeds and wild fruit trees adjacent to fields helps to prevent some species of stink bugs.



Stink Bug

Eggs

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Organic/Biological Control

The most important natural enemies of stink bugs are a few species of parasitic wasps that attack eggs. These help to reduce the numbers of nymphs occurring on plants. Also, some botanical insecticide dusts will control stink bugs.

Chemical Control

Stink bugs often are hard to kill. Treat with a registered insecticide when damage appears or when insects appear in damaging numbers. Materials with a long-residual activity are usually more effective because adults often leave and re-enter the crop. With all insecticides, repeat as needed and carefully follow label instructions.