

# Asparagus Beetle

*Crioceris asparagi* (L.) (Coleoptera: Chrysomelidae)

(Origin: European)



Adult Asparagus Beetle

**Primary Host:** Asparagus

**Damage:** Adults feed on tips of shoots as soon as they push through the ground, causing scars and browning of tips. Adults and larvae feed on stem and leaf surfaces. Larvae excrete black fluid that stains plants.

**Management:** Regular cutting helps reduce damage.

**Biocontrols:** A tiny ( $1/8$ " ) metallic green wasp, *Tetrastichus asparagi*, parasitizes asparagus beetle eggs.

**Cultural Controls:** Control volunteer plants to help reduce damage. Destroying crop residue eliminates overwintering sites for the adults.

**Physical Controls:** Hand picking is best in small patches. In summer, brushing the plants with a broom to knock off the larvae will help. Control during summer and fall may eliminate the problem for the next year.

**Chemical Controls:** Contact your local Penn State County Extension Agent for more info. <http://www.extension.psu.edu/extmap.html>

## Insect Description:

**Adults:**  $1/4$ " long; with bluish head, reddish neck, and creamy yellow spots with red borders on the wings. (Adult spotted asparagus beetles are larger, reddish orange with black antennae, eyes and undersides and 6 black spots on each wing.)

**Pupae:** Located in the soil below the asparagus plants.

**Larvae:**  $3/8$ " long; soft-bodied, gray with black heads.

**Eggs:** Black (Spotted asparagus beetle's are yellowish-green.)

**Life History:** Overwinter as adults in any suitable shelter like loose tree bark or hollow stems of old asparagus plants. About the time of first asparagus cutting, they make their way to the young shoots and lay eggs on them. The larvae feed about 2 weeks before dropping to the soil to pupate. There are 2 generations each year. The active beetles often drop to the ground if disturbed.



Asparagus Beetle Larva