

Pear Midge

Pear Midge (*Contarina pyrivora*) is a tiny darkly coloured fly that measures less than 4mm in length and lays its eggs in the centre of open flowers in April/May, when pear trees are in blossom. This pest can be extremely serious especially on lone trees as it considerably reduces the yield, since fruitlets that are infested by it invariably fall off.



DAMAGE

An attack of this pest is readily diagnosed soon after the fruit has set. For an initial period of about two weeks, infested fruitlets grow more rapidly than healthy ones and become either noticeably rounded or malformed. Once they reach 15-20mm in diameter they cease to develop and then shrivel, crack and decay and finally drop to the ground. The centres of such fruits will be found to consist of wet, black debris together with a number of small yellowish-white maggots, 4-5mm long. Even healthy fruitlets may drop, as the tree naturally diverts its energies into providing nutrients to the fast growing infected fruits at the expense of the slower growing normal ones.

The maggots escape when the attacked fruits fall to the ground by burrowing into the soil. They pupate in the soil and emerge as small, inconspicuous midges the following April, ready to lay eggs in the pear blossom.

CONTROL:

Non Chemical Control

Collection and destruction of infested fruitlets will reduce the number of maggots carried over from one season to the next. This is even more effective if you can create a barrier between the fallen fruit and the ground, which can be achieved by laying old sheeting or fleece around the tree to catch the fruit and prevent the escaping grubs burrowing into the soil. Hoeing the ground around the trunks of affected trees each week from the second week of June until the end of July, to expose the grubs will also help control this pest and feed the birds.

Chemical Control

Some protection against attack from the adult midges before they lay their eggs can be made by spraying with deltamethrin (Bayer Garden 'Provado Ultimate Fruit & Vegetable Bug Killer' or Bayer 'Sprayday Greenfly Killer') or lambda-cyhalothrin (Westland 'Resolva Bug Killer') when the blossom is at the white bud stage, but before the flowers open, to reduce the risk to pollinating insects. It is important to spray the trunks and undersides of the branches since the adult midges rest in such places.

USE CHEMICALS SAFELY: ALWAYS READ THE LABEL

When using chemicals it is most important to follow the manufacturer's instructions precisely. Only use on the fruits that are listed on the manufacturer's label. An accurate weighing machine and measuring cylinder should be obtained. Chemicals can be wasted by making concentrations unnecessarily strong or by making them too weak and ineffective. Furthermore, if chemicals are too strong they may cause damage to the foliage.