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What is a false chinch bug?

By [Chelsie Vandaveer](#)
February 11, 2004

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The false chinch bug (*Nysius raphanus* Howard and other species) is a tiny "true bug" found across warmer temperate areas of North America. It is most frequently found west of the Mississippi River and in areas with dry to arid climates. False chinch bugs feed by piercing plant tissues and sucking the juices.

The insect preferentially feeds on wild brassicas--mustard, radish, and rockets. When the population is high or weeds have dried, the insect willingly feeds on many other plants and moves into gardens, crop fields, and orchards. The insect is less picky in cultivated plants--they will feed on most crops. The insects scar fruits making them unsalable and outright kill many ornamentals.

False chinch bugs are dark grayish-brown or black with transparent wings. The adults are 2 to 3 millimeters (1/16 to 1/8 inch). Their eggs are pink crescents laid in the soil or on plants. All stages of the false chinch bug survive over winter; adults are capable of laying their first eggs in late winter. The insects have four or more generations per year.

If weather permits, false chinch bugs get out of hand rapidly. The nymphs swarm to migrate and move in mass to new locations. If a building is in their path, the insects will enter and they are so small that window screening will not prevent entry. There are reports that swarms of the nymphs have had so many individuals the ground appears "in motion". Jay B. Karren and Alan H. Roe (2001) report that one swarm in Utah was two inches thick on the soil. Craig Kallsen (2001) reports that disturbed, swarms of the adults in California form clouds that make breathing difficult.

Killing false chinch bugs is easy. The bugs readily drown and can be killed with a hard stream of water. Their inability to survive in water may be the reason the bugs prefer dry habitats and are seldom found where heavy rain is frequent.

The University of Minnesota Extension Service has more information on the false chinch bug including a photograph of this tiny insect. To view the article by Bill Hutchison and David Ragsdale, click on the link:

<http://www.vegedge.umn.edu/mnvegnew/vol3/629chin.htm>

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(Compiled from: "[False Chinch Bug Suspected of Damaging Citrus Fruit](#)", Craig Kallsen, UCCE Farm Advisor, University of California Cooperative Extension, 2001 and "[False Chinch Bugs, Factsheet 37](#)", Jay B. Karren and Alan H. Roe, Utah State University Extension, 2001)

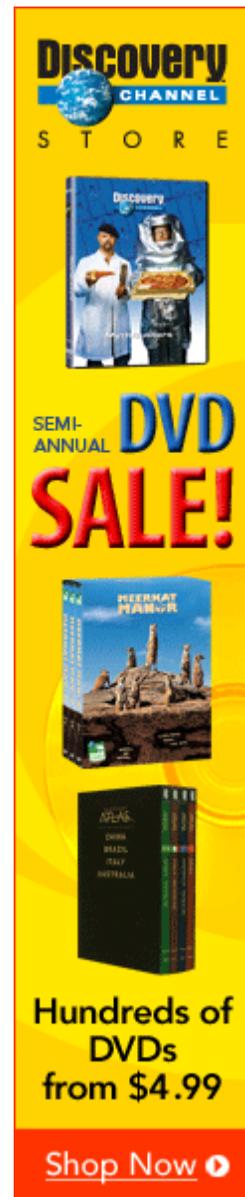
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