

## SYRPHID FLIES *Diptera: Syrphidae Syrphus* spp., *Allograpta* spp.

### DESCRIPTION

**Adults** are 10 to 12 mm long marked with yellow, black, or white bands resembling bees or small yellowjackets. They fly swiftly and tend to hover over plants (also call hover or flower flies). Adults feed only on pollen, nectar, or honeydew produced by aphids. **Larvae** are about 12 mm long, wrinkled or slug-like, and tapered to a point anteriorly. They are usually brown or green with whitish areas. **Eggs** are chalky-white with faint longitudinal ridges and are laid singly among aphid colonies.



Syrphid fly adult

### LIFE HISTORY

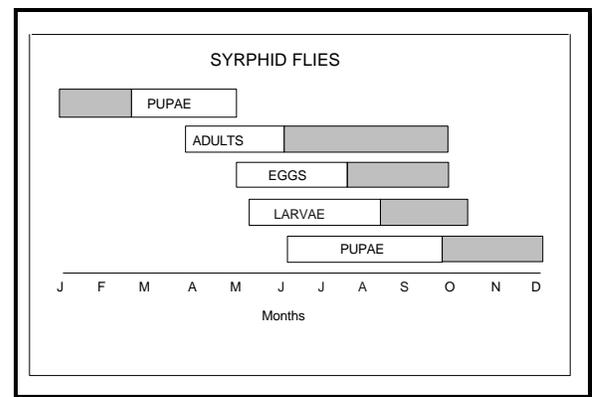
Syrphid flies overwinter as pupae in the soil. Adults begin emerging in April and May about the same time as aphid populations begin to increase. They lay eggs on leaves and stems of plants infested with aphids or other suitable prey. Eggs hatch in 3 to 4 days into soft-bodied maggot-like larvae. Larvae feed for 7 to 10 days, then drop to the soil to pupate. A life cycle from egg to adult is completed in 16 to 28 days and there are three to seven overlapping generations each year.



Syrphid fly larva

### IMPORTANCE

Larvae feed on soft-bodied insects, particularly aphids. As many as 400 aphids may be consumed by one larva during its development period. Larvae seize aphids with their mouth hooks and suck out the body contents. These predators are common in most field and vegetable crops and may be important in suppressing aphid populations if unnecessary applications of nonselective insecticides are avoided. Two common species of syrphid flies occur in the northwest: the western syrphid, *Syrphus opinator* and *Scaeva pyrastris*, and both species are commonly found in mint fields.



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