

Bagrada Bug: A New Pest of Cole Crops and Vegetable Gardens in Santa Barbara County

There has been a large outbreak of Bagrada bugs throughout Santa Barbara County this month. The Bagrada bug, *Bagrada hilaris*, is an invasive species native to Africa that has spread to India, Pakistan, parts of Southeast Asia, and Italy. In the U.S. it was first seen in Los Angeles County in 2008 but has since been found in Nevada, Arizona, and New Mexico with unconfirmed reports from Texas. Bagrada bugs feed on cruciferous vegetables such as broccoli, cauliflower, kale, brussel sprouts, and cabbage but they have also been reported feeding on corn, potato, cotton, peppers, and cilantro. They also feed on weeds such as yellow mustard, sweet Alyssum, London rocket, and Sheperd's purse, to name a few. Bagrada bugs go through 5 nymph stages before they become adults. Adult Bagrada bugs are 3 to 5 mm long (less than ¼ inch) and are black with orange and white markings. The nymphs are much smaller and because of their size, shape, and color, they look like ladybugs. Recent research in agriculture has shown that insecticides containing bifenthrin were most effective while those with chlorpyrifos also resulted in some control. There are few options available for organic growers and these are being investigated. In residential and community vegetable gardens insecticidal soaps seem to provide some control but they apparently work best on the nymphs. Care must be taken when using soaps as they can burn plants depending on the plant species, soap concentration, and temperature. Row covers or netting can be used to protect plants but these must be elevated and not touching the plants because the bugs can feed through these coverings. The edges of protective covers must also be buried to prevent the bugs from crawling under and getting to the plants. For more detailed information please follow these links:

San Diego Master Gardener Program:

<http://www.mastergardenerssandiego.org/newsletter/article.php?ID=32>

Center for Invasive Species Research: http://cizr.ucr.edu/bagrada_bug.html

