



# CAES

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## **FOURLINED PLANT BUG (*Poecilocapsus lineatus*)**

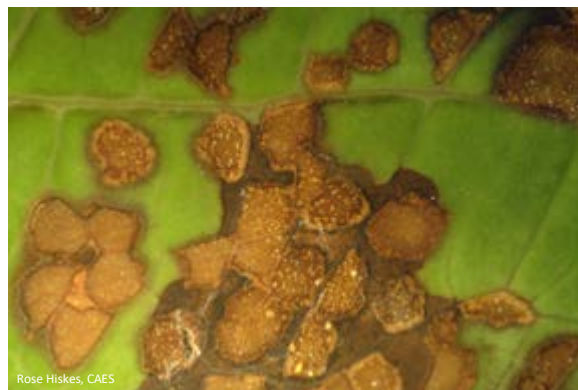


**Fig. 1: Fourlined plant bug adult**

The fourlined plant bug is a true bug in the family Miridae, or plant bugs (Fig. 1). They possess piercing-sucking mouthparts, which are used to penetrate and feed on plant tissues. Fourlined plant bugs have a wide range of host plants, making them a frequent pest of gardens and landscapes.

Primary hosts include herbaceous plants from the mint family such as catnip, hyssop, peppermint, and oregano. Fourlined plant bugs also feed on flowering plants such as carnations, geraniums, and snapdragons, as well as a wide variety of garden vegetables such as alfalfa, cucumber, lettuce, pea, and radish. Feeding damage is distinctive. A 1/8<sup>th</sup> inch spot centered around each feeding point becomes sunken and necrotic, resulting in small angular 'pits' that parallel leaf veins (Fig. 2). These feeding pits are usually seen in clusters and can be mistaken for fungal or

bacterial leaf spot diseases. Although damage is rarely economically harmful, heavy feeding on new plant growth can cause wilting.



**Fig. 2: Fourlined plant bug damage**

Adult fourlined plant bugs are 1/3<sup>rd</sup> inch long with red-orange heads and yellow-green wings marked with four black longitudinal stripes which is how they got their common name. Adult bugs are active in the summer. Females oviposit (lay eggs) directly into the stems of host plants, where the eggs overwinter protected inside the dried-out stems. Nymphs hatch the following spring. They are small and orange-bodied – the distinctive wings have not yet developed. – They are the principal cause of feeding damage. There is only one generation per year, so damage appears primarily during late spring.

**Control:**

Control of fourlined plant bug requires anticipation of activity; once plant damage is seen the insects have moved on and thus treatment will be ineffective. Watch for fourlined plant bug nymphs early in the spring on growing host plants, during April – June. Treat with insecticidal soap or other low-impact pesticides. Herbaceous host plant stems, especially those that have sustained plant bug damage, should be cut down and removed from the garden during fall to eliminate overwintering eggs. When fourlined plant bug populations are low, plant damage is minimal and does not generally require control measures.