

## **Brassicaceae Seedling Pest Control**

### **The Crop.**

Broccoli, Cabbage, Cauliflower and Brussels Sprouts, plus Alyssum and Stocks.

### **The Pest.**

Brassicaceae are particularly susceptible to Grub infestations. Anyone who has grown vegetables has seen Cabbage White Butterflies fluttering between carefully tended rows and cursed the large holes chewed through leaves by their voracious offspring. Diamond Backed Moths are less conspicuous than the larger White Butterflies, but their grubs are just as hungry.

Both of these Insects are major commercial pests as they have developed resistance to most common pesticides. They are however surprisingly easy to control, so long as the grower has the patience to treat plants regularly.

### **The Treatment**

The Treatment involves weekly spraying, or drenching with the living bacteria *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt). 'DiPel' is the commonly available Bt and it is available in most Garden Centres.

Bt bacteria have been bred over many years to very specifically infect only White butterfly and Diamond Backed moth caterpillars. This method of pest control has two strong advantages:

1. As the Bt. is a natural predator, the grubs are less likely to develop resistance.
2. The bacteria is so specific to grubs it poses no known threat to people handling it, or to beneficial garden insects.

### **Thorough Spraying is essential.**

It is important to remember the bacteria must be eaten (ingested) to be effective.

This means that the more leaf area covered during spraying, the greater the chance of infecting all the grubs and the better the chances of minimising plant damage through grub grazing. The spray does leave a fine whitish film on the foliage.

Bt's must be applied regularly to effectively control grubs and they cannot be mixed with other chemicals in the Watering can or sprayer. Perhaps most importantly Bt's are living organisms so they must be fresh. After about a year in storage the bacteria begin to lose effectiveness.