

## Tomato Hornworm

**Injury.** The hornworm feeds on the leaves and new stems of the tomato plant. During July and August, they also

the following spring, or if the weather conditions are suitable, the moth may emerge from the pupa in 2 to 4 weeks. The emerging moth makes its way to the soil surface and mates and then begins to deposit its eggs on the tomato plants for the next brood of hornworm.

**Management.** There are a number of natural factors that help to control the hornworm. One of the most common parasites in home gardens is a small wasp. Occasionally, hornworms are seen with a number of white projections protruding from their bodies. These are the cocoons of the small parasitic braconid wasps. The wasp larvae feed inside the hornworm during its lifespan and kill the host upon emergence.

Control is most effective during July and August. Handpicking the hornworms on infested plants in the garden gives good control and is especially useful in small gardens. Either the insecticide carbaryl (Sevin) or Rotenone or Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*) may also be used to control hornworms. Be sure to follow the manufacturer's directions when using any pesticides.

**Description.** The tomato hornworm is a large (3 1/2 to 4 inches when mature) pale green caterpillar with white and black markings. A brown form also occurs although it is not usually as common as the green form. The name hornworm comes from the fact that these caterpillars have a projection or a spike on one of the last abdominal segments. The adult moth, called a sphinx or hawk moth, is a medium to large, heavy-bodied insect with narrow front wings. The body is spindle-shaped, tapering at both ends, and the antennae are fairly thick. The adult is a mottled gray-brown color with yellow spots on the sides of the abdomen and a wing spread of 4 to 5 inches.

occasionally feed on the fruit. They are often noticed in the home garden because of their large size or because the foliage of the plant just "disappears".

**Life History.** In late spring, the adult moth lays eggs on the undersides of tomato leaves. The eggs hatch in 6 to 8 days and the larva passes through 5 or 6 stages reaching full growth in three to four weeks. The full-grown larva then burrows into the soil and transforms into the pupal stage. The pupa may remain in the soil all winter and emerge as a moth

