SCOUTING FOR ONION THRIPS

To find the first thrips of the season, look deep into the leaf axils. The adults are brown and up to 2 mm in length (Fig. 1), while the nymphs are yellow and 0.5 to 1.2 mm in length (Fig. 2). Inspect 15 to 20 plants and count the total number of OT per plant and divide by the average number of leaves per plant to get the number of OT per leaf. Thrips feeding causes silvery streaking along the leaves. If you can already see thrips feeding damage (Fig. 3) that is also a good indication that it is time to spray. If there is a lot of feeding damage, than you likely missed a timely first spray.

Figure 1. Adult onion thrips have already begun to infest transplanted onions that are in the 4-5-leaf stage and older. Photo: Christy Hoepting, Cornell Vegetable Program

Figure 2. Onion thrips nymphs in leaf axil of onion plant. Photo: Whitney Cranshaw, Colorado State University

Figure 3. Subtle streaking along leaves is an early indication of early onion thrips feeding. This plant has reached the spray threshold. Photo: Christy Hoepting, CVP