

Azalea's Worst Nightmare

The Strawberry Root Worm, *Paria fragariae* (Wilcox)

INTRODUCTION

The strawberry rootworm (SRW) is an emergent pest on production azaleas in the southeast. Larvae feed in the soil on roots, but do minimal damage. Adult beetles emerge and feed at night, chewing small holes in the foliage, making them extremely difficult to detect. Beetles hide in buds, bracts, and leaf folds during the day.

SRW DAMAGE



UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

- SRW is currently listed as *Paria fragariae* species complex, using DNA sequencing we will determine the correct taxonomic classification of the SRW species found in the southeast.
- It has not been confirmed that SRW larvae feed on azalea roots, we are using transparent soil media (TSM) to observe the feeding habits of the larvae.
- Afflicted production nurseries are currently spraying on a 28 day rotation to control SRW, we are evaluating alternative control technologies including natural predators, cultural control practices, and entomophagous organisms (fungi and nematodes).

LIFE CYCLE



CONTROL

Cultural

- Since SRW prefer to overwinter in litter around plants (Boyd and Hesselein 2004), sanitation may decrease numbers in the field.

Chemical

- SRW can be controlled using foliar sprays of Marathon® (imidacloprid) or Safari® (dinotefuran). Applications at night are also effective.

