

## Leaffooted bugs

(Order: Heteroptera, Family: Coreidae, *Leptoglossus* spp.)

### Description:

**Adult:** Leaffooted bugs get their name from the flattened tibia of the hind leg, which gives this segment a leaf-like appearance. There are seven recorded species in the southeastern United States, with *Leptoglossus phyllopus* being very common. They are medium sized bugs, usually about 20 mm long. Adults are brown. Some species have a broad white stripe across the body about midway between the head and tip of the abdomen. Most also have white markings on the leaf-like section of the hind leg.

**Immature stages:** Eggs are about 1.4 mm long, barrel shaped, bronze to dark brown, and deposited in rows. Nymphs are orange, red, or reddish-brown and similar to adults in shape but lack wings.

### Biology:

**Life cycle:** Eggs are deposited in rows on foliage or stem tissue and hatch in 5-7 days. Nymphs develop through 5 instars in 25-30 days. Typically only one generation has been observed per year in Georgia, with the long lived adults serving as the overwintering stage.

**Seasonal distribution:** Adults emerge from overwintering under plant trash or mulch in late spring. Some species reproduce only on weeds while others will reproduce on vegetables. As fruit damage is the primary concern, movement into fields after flowering is the time of greatest concern.

**Damage to Crop:** Leaffooted bugs have piercing-sucking mouthparts and damage crops similarly to stink bugs. The greatest damage results from feeding on fruiting structures. As it heals, the feeding site becomes hard and darkens. Seeds fed upon may be shriveled, deformed, and shrunken, or may simply bear a dark spot and depression at the feeding site, depending on the stage of development when attacked. Similarly, damage to ears of corn and fruit varies greatly with the development stage at which the produce is fed upon. Damage early in development can lead to severe deformities and abscission, while damage near harvest may result in small dark spots at the feeding site.

**Management:** Leaffooted bugs appear to be developing into a more consistent pest in Georgia, but are still considered as sporadic pests. Visual plant examination for all stages is the most common sampling method. Some species of leaffooted bug reproduce only on thistle, and weed management may reduce damage potential. When populations move into susceptible crops, they are generally controlled with insecticides. Unfortunately, leaffooted bugs have become a fairly common pest for organic growers in Georgia where pesticides cannot be used. One approach in organic production systems is to try to manage the overwinter populations of adults that can be found down in the organic mulch. Soapy water can drive adults out of the mulch on a warm winter day.



*Leptoglossus phyllopus* adult.



Other *Leptoglossus* sp.



*Leptoglossus phyllopus* eggs.