



Pteromalid Wasps (parasitoids)

What to look for

Pteromalid wasps are widespread parasitoids of many caterpillar pests. The female lays eggs within a host pupa, from which more than 100 wasps may emerge. Look for pest larvae that turn brown as pteromalid wasps develop inside.



Pteromalid wasp laying eggs into a cabbageworm pupa

Appearance

Adults are small (about 1/16 inch) and black or metallic blue-green.

Host types attacked

eggs, larvae and pupae of many crop pests caterpillars

Crops protected

Many, including:
rice paddies
fruit trees
field crops

Pests attacked

many crop pests, including
cabbageworm
diamondback moth
leafhopper and planthopper
eggs
mealybugs
caterpillar pests



Rice paddies

Pteromalid Wasps

Pteromalid wasps can be found near plants that attract their hosts, which include sunn hemp, fruit trees, and composite flowers such as sunflowers, daisies, and chamomile.



Adult pteromalid wasp

Parasitoids

Parasitoids are insects that prey on other insects and thus can be of benefit to vegetable growers. Their eggs or larvae are usually found in or on a single insect host. The immature parasitoid develops within or on its host, ultimately killing the pest. Most parasitoids are wasps or flies.



Photo Credits: Front Top Image - Hymenoptera: Pteromalidae by Richard Leung, Pteromalid wasp ovipositing into a cabbageworm pupa from Natural Enemies of Vegetable Insect Pests, Rice paddies by Angie Harms, Adult pteromalid wasp by Scott Justis, Parasitoids image by Scott Bauer for USDA Agricultural Research Service - Bugwood.org