

## DAMSEL BUGS Hemiptera: Nabidae *Nabis alternatus*, *N. americanus*

### DESCRIPTION

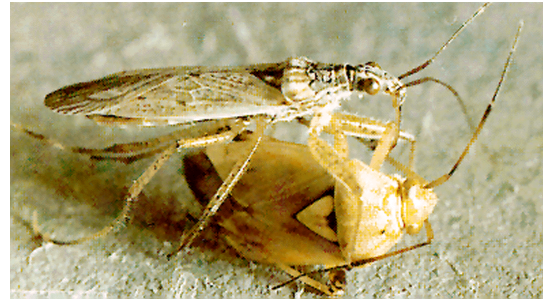
**Adults** are tan or grayish-brown, with piercing-sucking mouthparts and well-developed wings. The membranous portion of the first pair of wings has a number of small cells around the margin. The front pair of legs is modified for grasping their prey. They have slender bodies, and are about 4 to 12 mm long. **Nymphs** resemble adults, except they are smaller and have no wings.

### LIFE HISTORY

Damsel bugs overwinter as adults in protected places around the margins of fields. Adults of the Western damsel bug, *N. alternatus*, begin emerging in May or early June and *N. americanus* begins emerging in late March or early April. Adults begin laying eggs soon after emergence. Eggs are flattened on top and are inserted into soft plant tissue along the stems. Eggs hatch into nymphs, which feed on small insects, mites, or eggs. Early instar nymphs may be found on the soil surface beneath plants and under litter near the stems. *N. americanus* has two complete generations each year with little overlap between the developmental stages. *N. alternatus* has numerous, overlapping generations during the season.

### IMPORTANCE

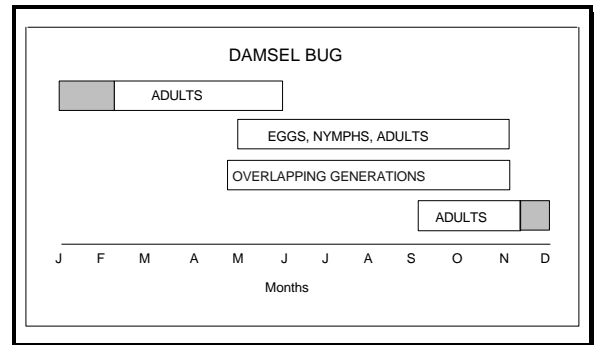
Adults and nymphs feed on many soft-bodied insects, including aphids, spider mites, leafhoppers, small caterpillars, and insect eggs including those of the Colorado potato beetle. Adults are swift and aggressive and rapidly suck the body contents from their prey. Fifth instar Western damsel bugs may consume two or three late instar lygus bugs per day. Warm weather in the spring encourages these predators to multiply. However, cool, moist springs may allow prey populations, such as aphids, to build-up before the damsel bug population becomes large enough to provide control.



Western damsel bug adult feeding on lygus



Western Damsel bug nymph



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