



Know Nevada Insects Youth Education Exercise

Common name: Sphinx moth
Scientific name: *Manduca quinquemaculata*



EXTENSION

College of Agriculture,
Biotechnology & Natural Resources

Fact Sheet 19-15



Kevin Burls, Extension Integrated Pest Management Educator

Marcia Moffitt, Lyon County Master Gardener Coordinator

Joy Newton, Lyon County Extension Educator

I am the five-spotted Sphinx moth! I can be called many things, including Sphinx moth, hummingbird moth, hawk moth or the tomato hornworm. I can be found in most of Mexico and the United States, and even in southern Canada. I am called a pest in home gardens and on farms. I am a pest because I can eat a *lot* of plants as a caterpillar and can even eat the same tomato you might eat.



Why am I important?

Most people know this moth as the tomato hornworm. This is because we almost always find the caterpillar, or larva, on tomato, potato or tobacco plants. The caterpillar eats the host plant, including leaves, flowers and fruits. Because of this, farmers and gardeners try to find the caterpillar before it eats many of their plants. The caterpillars are almost exactly the same color as tomato leaves, and they often hide underneath leaves, making them hard to find. Many animals will eat the caterpillar, including birds, wasps and spiders, which can help out gardeners!

There are many other types of hawk moths in Nevada that look like the tomato hornworm but don't eat tomatoes. One example is the white-lined Sphinx moth, which eats plants around Nevada but is not a pest of vegetables that humans eat.



Caterpillar damage on tomato plant.
Photo by Marcia Moffitt.



Caterpillar frass on tomato plant.
Photo by Marcia Moffitt.



White-lined Sphinx moth.
Photo by Joy Newton.



What is my life cycle?

Photo by
Marcia Moffitt.

Photo by
Andrew Nuss.

Egg*

*Eggs are typically laid singly on leaves.

Just like butterflies, Sphinx moths start off as a very small egg, usually laid under a leaf.

Sphinx Moth Word Search

See words on Page 3

After a week, a small caterpillar hatches and begins to eat leaves, growing for up to a month.

Caterpillar

Go to
chrysalis

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D	J	W	U	W	V	O	C	B	F	V	A	U	C	F	K	O	D	O	F	C	M	I	I	K
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A	V	H	Y	L	Z	G	E	R	X	L	H	O	Q	C	J	N	X	J	N	E	C	T	A	R
M	A	G	F	D	S	G	S	Y	H	Z	O	W	C	K	I	L	X	I	B	U	N	X	N	P
H	I	Q	N	M	R	O	T	A	N	I	L	L	O	P	K	B	J	H	F	H	H	F	T	I



Photo by
Marcia Moffitt.

Chrysalis

After this, the caterpillar will “wander” off the plant and find a place to turn into a pupa, usually in the soil. Unlike a butterfly chrysalis, this moth pupa looks very plain.



Photo by
Joy Newton.

Adult

The adult moth emerges after about two weeks, and drinks nectar from plants that have their flowers open at night. Females will also look for plants to lay eggs. Adults live about two to three weeks.

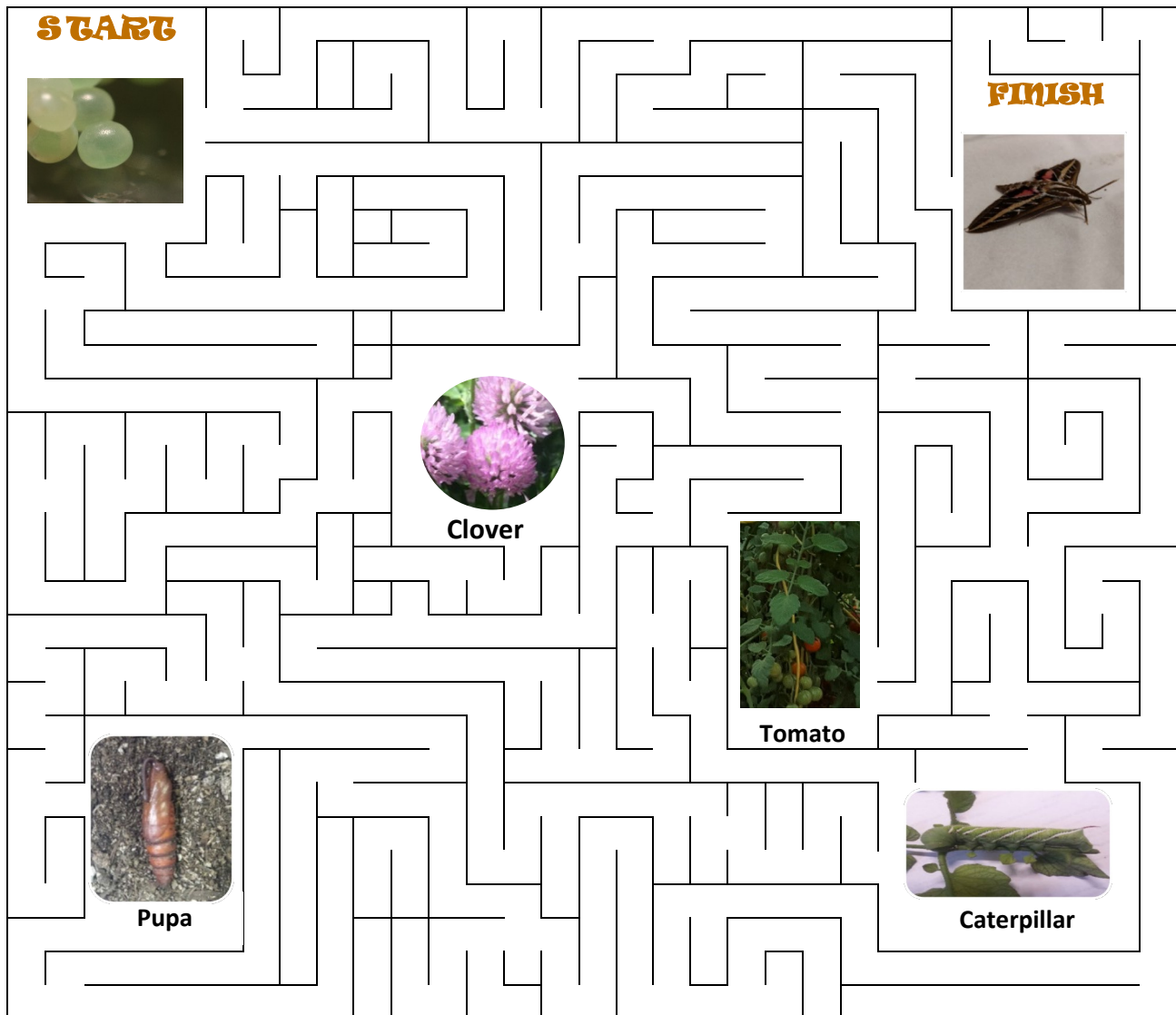
Fill in the blanks from the word search to complete the paragraph about Sphinx moths.

Words for Searches

The _____ moth is perhaps the most striking moth caterpillar in Nevada. These distinctive _____ are often called _____ because they have a horn at the tail end of the body. The _____ is best known as a _____ of plants, especially _____, _____ and _____. They eat all parts of the _____. The moth _____ is often seen hovering in front of flowers drinking _____, giving them the nickname of _____. Also called the _____, this moth family contains many other beautiful caterpillars and adults that are not pests. One notable Sphinx moth in Nevada is the _____ Sphinx moth which eats many native plants.

Sphinx
Hawk moths
Hornworms
Egg
Larva
Pupa
Adult
Tomatoes
Pollinator
Tobacco
Hummingbird Moths
Nectar
Host Plant
Potatoes
Caterpillars
Pest
White-lined

Follow the life cycle from egg to adult. The egg must hatch on the proper host plant or it will not be able to develop into a moth.



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