

# DIFFERENTIAL GRASSHOPPER

Orthoptera (Caelifera): Acrididae  
*Melanoplus differentialis*

Bug  
of the  
Month



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**We are hopping into the new year by highlighting the differential grasshopper, *Melanoplus differentialis*.** This *M. differentialis* is sitting on top of an open sunflower, which is one of their favorite foods. Along with sunflowers, *M. differentialis* will munch on many different plants (they are dietary **generalists**), and they especially like forbs.

*Melanoplus differentialis* can be

found in most of the United States; they thrive in disturbed habitats and are common crop pests of various grains, vegetables and fruits. Generally speaking, adult *M. differentialis* are large, brownish yellow, and found in damp vegetation or in crop fields through the summer and early fall. However, some *M. differentialis* populations are **polymorphic**, meaning that they are found having yellow OR

completely black pigmentation! Scientists have determined that variation in grasshopper (and cricket) pigmentation can result from interacting genetic and environmental conditions. You can learn more about the fascinating biology of grasshoppers, and how to keep your crops safe from their giant appetites, by visiting Penn State's Extension website.

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January 2022



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