

LILY CATERPILLAR *POLYTELA GLORIOSAE* FAB. (NOCTUIDAE : LEPIDOPTERA), A SERIOUS PEST OF *GLORIOSA SUPERBA* L.

Gloriosa superba L., commonly known as glory lily, is a valuable medicinal plant in Kerala. Severe incidence of *Polytela gloriosae* Fab. was noticed on *Gloriosa superba* in the garden of the College of Horticulture, Vellanikkara during October-November 1989.

The moth is stout measuring 3.5 cm in wingspan and 1.3 cm in body length. Head and thorax are blue-black and the basal segments of palpi and antennae are orange red. Abdomen is black with a tinge of orange in the terminal segments. Forewings are greyish black beautified with mosaic patterns in yellow, orange, pink and black. Hind wings are dark grey in colour. Adults lay eggs in clusters of 13 to 42 on the leaves. Incubation

period is 3 to 4 days. Larval period ranges from 16 to 20 days, undergoing five instars. Early instars are orange-red in colour and later instars are purple-black with dorsal, lateral and sublateral series of white spots. Pupation is in soil and for 15-20 days. Early instars feed on chlorophyll of the leaves. But the later instars feed voraciously, leaving only the hard stem of the plant resulting in its complete devastation.

Fletcher reported *P. gloriosae* on *G. superba* from India, Burma and Ceylon in 1920. Hampson (1976) recorded the pest on *Amaryllis* throughout India and Ceylon. Lily plants (*Crinum* spp.) are damaged by the larva of *P. gloriosae* (David and Kumaraswamy, 1978).

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