THE BUTTERFLY CACYREUS MARSHALLI
IN NORTHERN ITALY AND SUSCEPTIBILITY
OF COMMERCIAL CULTIVARS OF PELARGONIUM

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The ornamental geranium is a traditional and very common plant largely cultivated in Europe. The geranium bronze butterfly (Cacyreus marshalli) (Lepidoptera:Lycaenidae), inserted in EPPO A2 list, is now threatening the popularity of both Geranium spp. and Pelargonium spp.

The species was introduced from South Africa and first intercepted on imported plants and eradicated in the UK in 1978 (Sarto I Monteyes, 1992). In 1986 it was found in Balearic Islands (Eitshberger & Stamer, 1990); it then occurred in the rest of Spain, Portugal, France, Belgium and the Principality of Monaco. In Italy, it was first detected in 1996; it has now spread throughout the country (Trematerra & Parenzan, 1997; Lupi & Jucker, 2004).

MATERIALS AND METHODS
Studies on the biology of geranium bronze butterfly were conducted in Milan (northern Italy) on Pelargonium spp. from April to the end of December, observing directly the presence of adult, larvae eggs or damage.

To test the susceptibility to the attack of the butterfly, 40 different ornamental geraniums were used (see the table): 10 cvs of zonal pelargoniums (Pelargonium × hortorum); 3 cvs of ivy-leafed pelargoniums (P. peltatum); 3 cvs of regal pelargoniums (P. × domesticum); and 16 species or cvs of scented-leafed pelargoniums.

The plants were exposed to the pest from the end of May to the end of September, in two different localities. The plants were observed every week, and data on damage and their symptomatology were collected.

RESULTS
Many overlapping generations of the pest occurred, with adults detected from the beginning of May to the middle of October. Damages were first observed on zonal and ivy-leaved pelargoniums in June; regal and scented-leaved pelargoniums were attacked later and less severely. Most of the plants tested were attacked. Only on some scented-leaved pelargoniums (Abrotanifolium, Concolor lace, Denticulatum, Fair ellen, Filicifolium, Odoratissimum, Purple unique, Prince of orange, Royal oak, Wayward angel) were no larvae or damage found. Further research is needed to detect the reasons for this apparent resistance.

REFERENCES

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