

JAPANESE BEETLES ARE HERE!

Fredric Miller, Ph.D.
Extension Entomologist
University of Illinois

Adult Japanese beetles began emerging in late June this season and will continue to be around for six to eight weeks. As with many insects, the Japanese beetle is early this year because of the early spring. Normally they arrive in early to mid-July.

The adult beetles feed on nearly 300 different plant species and nearly 140 plant families. Highly preferred hosts include roses and related species, grapes, raspberries, lindens, crabapples and certain elms. The beetles feed on the foliage resulting in a skeletonized appearance. Highly preferred plants may be severely defoliated. The adults are about 1/2 inch long, shiny, and have a metallic green or greenish-bronze appearance with reddish wing covers. They have five white pairs of spots (tufts of hairs) on both sides of the abdomen.

This insect spends most of the year in the soil as a grub feeding on turfgrass roots. Growth is completed during June and adult emergence occurs in early to mid-July in northern Illinois. Eggs are laid in the soil by the adult female beetle, hatch, and the grubs overwinter in the soil. There is one generation per year.

To prevent feeding damage by the adult beetles, insecticidal sprays may be applied to protect susceptible plants. Newly transplanted or newly installed plants will probably need protection as their root systems are not established and require leaves to produce food for growth. More established plants that are healthy and vigorous should be able to tolerate some defoliation. Highly valued ornamental or aesthetically visible plants will also require protection. Since the adults feed for an extended period of time, multiple sprays may be needed depending on the product. Be sure to read and follow the label directions.

Research studies have shown that the Japanese beetle traps are generally ineffective and thus are not recommended. They tend to attract more beetles into the area, thus increasing the potential for defoliation of susceptible plants.

Keeping your plants healthy and well-maintained is the key!

