

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For more information,
contact: Jake Weber
Horticulture Agent, Wildcat Extension District
jweber@ksu.edu, (620)724-8233

Beetle Invasion Soon to begin

It's been just a few years since Japanese beetles started to invade Southeast Kansas yards and gardens. Their onslaught continues as many area gardeners will soon experience the beetles' destructive power for the first time.

Japanese beetles were discovered in North America in the early 1900s; possibly arriving in New Jersey on a shipment of imported iris roots. The insect is about the size of a potato beetle. It has a bright, iridescent green colored head and neck region and its elytra (wing covers over its abdomen) are a contrasting reddish bronze color. A row of five white, hairy dots lines each side of the beetle's abdomen just below the wing covers, and two, large hairy dots on its tail give it the appearance of rear-facing headlights.

Japanese beetles will soon emerge from their pupal chambers just below the soil surface. Adult beetles often feed on the topside of leaves eating mainly the fleshy portion of the leaf blade and leaving the veins intact. This type of feeding gives the leaves a skeletonized appearance. Along with their voracious feeding, continuous mating and egg-laying are the norm for the beetles. Eggs are laid from two to four inches deep in loose, moist soil. Each female beetle may lay up to sixty eggs over her adult lifespan.

After hatching the soil inhabiting grubs begin feeding on the tender roots of grass and other plants. Their feeding activity continues throughout the remainder of the summer and into the fall. Feeding stops when the soil temperature drops below 60 degrees at which time they burrow deeper into the soil to overwinter. Grub feeding resumes the following spring and does not cease until they are ready to pupate. Adult Japanese beetles usually begin to emerge in late June.

Japanese beetles possess an extremely good sense of smell and can easily detect the most desirable plants to eat. As the beetles feed the odor of freshly eaten foliage attracts even more beetles; mob feeding is highly characteristic of this insect.

To prevent serious damage, it is important to frequently inspect your yard and garden. When Japanese beetles and their feeding damage is first noticed it's time for action. Early invaders, if just a few in number, can be swept in a bucket of soapy water. When a full invasion occurs spraying the plants with a residual-type insecticide is needed; always follow pesticide label directions.

For more information, contact jweber@ksu.edu, Horticulture Agent, jweber@ksu.edu, (620)724-8233

###

K - State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer