



Pest Identification and Control Sheet:

Japanese Beetles (*Popillia japonica*)

Updated:
01/23/14

**-4
Exotic
Invasive**

DESCRIPTION:

Japanese beetles were originally introduced to the US with nursery stock from Japan. They have become an extremely troublesome garden pest and are even beginning to impact native plants in many natural areas. They eat the foliage of a wide range of plants including roses, raspberries, strawberries, eggplants, and grapes often “skeletonizing” the leaves so that only the vein structure remains. They also consume flower parts of many species; they seem to be especially fond of legumes. These beetles can be present in great numbers and cause significant damage to native plants and vegetable crops alike. Home owners who are afflicted with these beetles need little convincing that something should be done to control them.

IDENTIFICATION:

Japanese beetles are a bit smaller than a dime with a very rounded body shape. They have a dark color overall, with brown outer wings covering their backs and green metallic iridescence head and thorax. Their hard outer wings create a formidable shell that is difficult for native predators to penetrate.

CONTROL METHODS:

While pesticides could be used to control them, we feel this will cause more harm than good in the long run, as there are many, many beneficial insects would also be harmed by these treatments. Pheromone traps, though sometimes recommended can be troublesome; they do trap and kill many beetles, but they also draw many more beetles to your yard than would otherwise be there.

Our recommended control method is to simply capture beetles during their peak activity period. This is done by filling a small pail (perhaps a re-used cool-whip container) with soapy water. When you find a cluster of beetles on a plant flick or shake them into the soapy container where they will be stuck, and eventually suffocate as their body is covered with the soap. Wait at least 30 minutes to be sure they are good and dead before you dispose of them. They can be composted or thrown in the trash. This takes a bit of practice but can be very effective once you get good at it.

Japanese beetles are attracted to groups of other Japanese beetles, so by killing the ones in your yard, you are not only removing these insects, but you are also reducing the number of new ones that will be attracted to your property. Repeat this every day or every other day for a few weeks during the worst time of year.

You will quickly learn which plants are most popular among the beetles, making your search more efficient. It is best to do this early in the morning when they are less active and slower moving in the cooler temperatures. If you try to capture them in the afternoon or early evening expect them to be a bit quicker at flying off after you knock them off of the plant.

NATIVE ALTERNATIVES:

See the following USDA Publication: http://www.aphis.usda.gov/lpa/pubs/pub_phjbeetle04.pdf

Mating pair of Japanese Beetles

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Japanese beetles skeletonizing a grape leaf.

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