



## **ALABAMA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SYSTEM/ LIMESTONE COUNTY OFFICE**

### **The Garden Spot For week of June 29, 2009**

#### **Japanese Beetles Have Returned!**

Summer is here and just like clockwork we are seeing the presence of those dreaded "baby June bugs" that eat all of our plants down. Actually, they are not June bugs at all but rather Japanese beetles.

Japanese beetles usually begin to emerge from the soil by late May or early June with late June being the peak time for emergence in our area. This emergence pattern will generally taper off in July but we may have encounters with Japanese beetles all the way through late summer.

Adult Japanese beetles are 3/8 inch long, metallic green with copperbrown wing covers. Adult beetles feed on at least 300 species of plants, including roses, other flowers and ornamentals, fruit trees, grapes, and even poison ivy. They usually feed in groups and prefer plants that are in the sun. Beetles feed on the upper surface of leaves, which results in a skeletonized appearance of damaged leaves.

Control of Japanese beetles is far from easy. This is a result of their very aggressive feeding habit, which results in the total skeletonized appearance of the damaged foliage. There are both nonchemical and chemical controls of Adult Japanese Beetles. Hand collecting beetles may not be the most effective method of control, but it can be used when the beetles are less numerous. Simply drop the beetles into a solution of soapy water where they will drown. A hand-held vacuum cleaner can also be used to remove beetles.

For chemical control, Carbaryl, such as registered formulations of Sevin, can be used. If you use carbaryl for beetles or other insect pests, be sure to check for spider mites. A mite "explosion" on plants with a few mites often occurs after an initial use of carbaryl. Other insecticides available for controlling Japanese beetles include acephate, cyfluthrin, imidacloprid, and bifenthrin. Use products according to label directions.

Believe it or not Japanese beetles will not eat everything that grows. Among the plants that Japanese beetles do not particularly care for are begonias, boxwoods, forsythia, hollies, hydrangeas, junipers, and pines. They also cause little or no damage to dusty miller, euonymus, magnolia, or caladiums. They will cause some damage to oak trees but usually will attack other plants first. You can reduce the amount of Japanese beetle damage by replacing some plants in your landscape with plants that do not attract them.

There are also [Japanese beetle traps](#) available; however, don't fall into the trap trap. In most home landscapes, using traps may even do more harm than good. Remember the traps use a pheromone to attract Japanese Beetles. While a lot of Japanese beetles will fall into the trap...many will not. The ones that do not go to the traps will release pheromone and can attract even more beetles into your front yard.

**Keep in mind that the beetles will not be here forever. These pests that you see damaging your vegetable or flower gardens will only be 'active' for about a month. They will soon cycle to other stages, where their activity is much less noticeable.**

If you have questions on home gardening or related topics, feel free to call the Limestone County Master Gardener 'HelpLine' on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 9 a.m. until 1 p.m. The Master Gardeners are highly trained and willing to help with your home gardening and home grounds questions. Their phone number is 232-5510 and they are located in an office at the Limestone County Extension Office at 1109 W. Market Street in Athens.



###