

JAPANESE BEETLE

Japanese beetles are a common garden pest. Metallic-green with bronze wings and fine hairs coating their body, they can measure up to 1/2 inch in length and can do significant damage to your plants.

Japanese beetles will feed on the fruits and leaves of a wide variety of plants in your garden, often leaving only the skeletons of leaves they've eaten. And they don't discriminate—Japanese beetles are known to feed on the leaves of more than 300 species of plants! The munched-on leaves will be lacelike in appearance, a telltale sign that these pesky critters have invaded your garden.

Look for adult Japanese beetles during early summer, when they will begin to feed on plant leaves and mate. During the late summer the females will lay their eggs in small 2-4-inch deep holes in the soil—a tasty treat for chickens, bluebirds, robins, or other insect-eating birds.

Don't have chickens? Tackle a Japanese beetle infestation by heading out into the cool hours of the morning and shaking or knocking the beetles off the plants into a jar of soapy water to drown them. Keeping up with them early is important—they are nothing if not prolific! These beetles will also use chemical signals to alert other beetles to good host plants, so don't give them the chance.

If you haven't seen any adult beetles yet, you can go one step further and use row cover as a barrier to keep the adults out. Check the plants regularly to make sure a few lucky beetles haven't found their way inside. Dispose of any that do.

For next year, consider setting up a few bird houses to encourage some robin and bluebird helpers!



Adult Japanese beetles, side and top views. Photo credit: Jenn Forman-Orth

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Garden Insects of North America: The Ultimate Guide to Backyard Bugs | Whitney Crenshaw

The Organic Gardener's Handbook of Natural Pest and Disease Control | Jeff Ball