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Subject: April Natural Resources News: Beetle Battle

City of Minnetonka

Beetle Battle



In April, it's easy to imagine the lush green foliage and colorful blossoms that will soon brighten yards, parks and natural areas. And it's frustrating to realize that by midsummer, those same gorgeous leaves and flowers might be riddled with holes caused by Japanese beetles.

These oval-shaped insects – identified by a shiny green head and bronze wing covers – are increasingly problematic, especially in landscaped urban areas. But you can take steps to reduce their impact.

Survivors

Japanese beetles were accidentally introduced to North America in 1916, as grubs (larvae) hidden among the roots of an imported iris. Adult Japanese beetles are excellent survivors, able to eat hundreds of tree species, garden plants and crops. Those first few beetles thrived, and their descendants moved steadily westward.



Female Japanese beetles prefer to lay their eggs a few inches below the soil in grassy areas.

There's no shortage of that habitat in the United States. A recent study by NASA showed that the U.S. has more than 40 million acres of lawn.



The grubs burrow after hatching, going as much as a foot underground to overwinter. They crawl upward when the soil thaws in spring and begin to feed on grass roots. Brown patches on your lawn could be the work of Japanese beetle grubs. Dead roots separate from the soil, making the turf appear trampled.

Large grubs pupate, and emerge from the grass as adults in late summer. Adult

beetles have an excellent sense of smell. They detect the chemicals released by damaged leaves and flower blossoms, and fly for miles in search of the source. Clusters of Japanese beetles feed from the top of a plant down, skeletonizing leaves as they go. Adults die in autumn, after mating and laying eggs in the grass.



Fighting Back

The best way to control this invader is to reduce its habitat. Converting a small portion of lawn might not seem helpful. But it adds up to a big difference when many people do it. Look for spots in your yard that are shaded, soggy, or otherwise require a lot of maintenance. Replant with a native plant bed, wildflowers or a tree.

Here are a few other ways to defend your yard in the battle against Japanese beetles:

- Accept wildlife as part of your team. Some birds eat Japanese beetles. Skunks, moles and other small mammals eat the grubs.
- Maintain mature trees and plants so they can recover from beetle feeding. Young and vulnerable plants may need special care, such as mulching or pruning, to increase vitality.
- Don't overwater your lawn. Japanese beetle grubs tolerate wet conditions.
- Avoid using pheromone (scent) traps, which will bring many more beetles to your yard.
- When beetle populations are highest, pick them by hand. (They don't bite or sting.) Go outside in the early morning or late evening, and flick them into a bucket of soapy water.

Upcoming NR Events

Volunteer Buckthorn Cutting

Cut buckthorn and arrange brush to decompose onsite. Additional information (including a map and parking instructions) will be emailed.

- Saturday, April 13 | 9 a.m.-noon
- Cullen Preserve, 2510 Oakland Road

Garlic Mustard Workshops

Learn the best methods and timing to control this highly invasive species.

- Wednesday, April 18 | 6:30-8 p.m.
- Monday, May 6 | 6:30-8 p.m.
- Minnetonka Community Center
14600 Minnetonka Blvd.

Registration is required for these events.

Visit eminnetonka.com/NRevents or call 952-988-8400.

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