Japanese Beetles Begin Emergence

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Abstract
Japanese beetles have a wide host range that includes many species of fruit and vegetable crops, ornamentals and field crops. Adults are metallic bronze and green with white tufts along the side of the abdomen (Photo 1). This pest is becoming a more common corn and soybean pest in Iowa. Adults started to emerge in late May last year, but the cooler temperatures this year have slowed down development in 2013.

Keywords
Entomology

Disciplines
Agricultural Science | Agriculture | Entomology

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Japanese Beetles Begin Emergence

By Erin Hodgson and Cody Kuntz, Department of Entomology

Japanese beetles have a wide host range that includes many species of fruit and vegetable crops, ornamentals and field crops. Adults are metallic bronze and green with white tufts along the side of the abdomen (Photo 1). This pest is becoming a more common corn and soybean pest in Iowa. Adults started to emerge in late May last year, but the cooler temperatures this year have slowed down development in 2013.

Photo 1. Japanese beetle adults are metallic bronze and green, and have white tufts of hair along the side of the abdomen. Photo by David Cappaert, www.ipmimages.org.

Literature shows adults need about 1,030 growing degree days (base 50°F) to complete development. Japanese beetles will continue emergence until around 2,150 degree days. Based on accumulating degree day temperatures in 2013, Japanese beetle adults should be active in some areas of southern Iowa this week (Figure 1). However, a few adults were already collected in pheromone traps in Story County (central Iowa) today, so expect adults to show up in northern Iowa in about seven days if warm temperatures continue. To more accurately predict adult emergence in your area this summer, use this website to generate up-to-date information. Click on the “View Degree Day Map” button in the left corner of the page, and then set the parameters for degree days to create a new map. Make sure to set...
the start date to January 1 of the current year and the end date to today; set the base temperature to 50°F and the ceiling temperature to 86°F.

Figure 1. Growing degree days accumulated (base 50°F) for Japanese beetle adults in Iowa (Jan. 1 - June 19, 2013). Adults begin emergence around 1,030 degree days. Map courtesy of Iowa Environmental Mesonet, ISU Department of Agronomy.

Damage and Management

Adults prefer to feed between soybean leaf veins, but can ultimately consume most of the leaf (Photo 2). The treatment threshold for Japanese beetles in soybean is 30 percent defoliation before bloom and 20 percent defoliation after bloom. Most people tend to overestimate plant defoliation, but this reference can help with more accurate estimations. In corn, Japanese beetles can feed on leaves, but the most significant damage comes from clipping silks during pollination (Photo 3). Consider a foliar insecticide during tasseling and silking if there are three or more beetles per ear, silks have been clipped to less than ½ inch, and pollination is less than 50 percent complete.

Photo 2. Japanese beetles skeletonize soybean leaves. Photo by Mark Licht, ISU.
Photo 3. Japanese beetles are strongly attracted to silking corn. Photo by Erin Hodgson, ISU.

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