

BEETLES

By Kent Campbell

Japanese Beetles are not the only beetles rosarians face each season. For about the past two or three years they have been joined by another large similar appearing beetle-type flyer. I don't know its proper scientific name, but as kids we called them June Bugs. Perhaps you, as I did, would catch one, tie a length of sewing thread around one of its legs, and have a "pet" June Bug that "buzzed" loudly as it flew around. They too, have finished their adult life cycle for this year and have burrowed into the ground with their smaller cousins. The eggs of both these groups will hatch into grubs which over-winter in the soil to become next summer's beetles.

I thought that this year's beetles were heavier in number than usual. We have heard that they run in cycles, but it seems like too many summers have passed since we have had a lighter invasion.

Now we are facing the influx of another destructive pest, the Cucumber Beetle. Though not as numerous as the Japanese Beetles, they do significant damage deep inside the petals of the blossom where they are nearly impossible to reach with a spray. They rarely, if ever, attack the foliage of a plant. These beetles seem to appear about the time farmers begin harvesting corn. Some rosarians claim that they are the adult stage of the corn worm. These little pests are smaller than a Japanese Beetle and look a little like Lady Bugs, except they are longer and narrow in the body. Their color is a greenish yellow and they are covered with black, Lady Bug-like, spots.

I combat the Cucumber Beetle about the same way as I do the Japanese Beetle. I spray only the tops of the plants and their buds and blossoms with a hand squeezed mister at least once each day, preferably twice, using Orthene 75 or an insecticide called Talstar. The latter is very expensive and is available from Rosemania. Neither of these will cause blossoms to "spot" as we prepare for the district show. The primary chemical for Japanese Beetles is Sevin (50% or greater.) This method of spraying and these chemicals also combat aphids, which seem to be very prevalent right now on new buds as they appear.

Another reason for spraying for these beetles only "high on the bush" is that not all beetles are bad guys. There are over 40,000 species of common ground beetles, sometimes called soldier beetles. These fighters hide under things and feast on various garden insect eggs and pests such as aphids and earwigs and - hang on to your hats - snails and slugs. Vegetation is not part of their diet so your roses are safe from them and safer because of them!

As we work through the summer and think toward the fall shows, especially the District Convention and Show at Louisville, remember the old adage, "If you have roses in the spring it's because of God, and if you have them in the fall it's because of you!"