

Viburnum Leaf Beetle *Pyrrhalta viburni* (Paykull)

The Viburnum Leaf Beetle (VLB) is an invasive insect from Europe. It is believed to have entered North America on imported nursery stock and is now found throughout New England. VLB feeds on many species of viburnums, heavily damaging and defoliating this popular landscape shrub.

Identification

Adults are 4.5 - 6.5 mm in length, yellowish brown to light brown. Mature larvae are 10-11 mm, vary in color from pale green to pale orange or yellow, and are covered with a pattern of black dots and dashes.



VLB Adult



VLB Larva

Life Cycle and Damage

VLB completes one generation each year. Adult females lay eggs from late June to October on viburnum twigs and small branches. The eggs overwinter, requiring a chilling period of about five months before hatching. Immature larvae hatch out in early to mid-May when viburnum leaf buds open and feed in groups between the veins on the underside of tender, newly expanded leaves. Larvae skeletonize the leaves, consuming leaf tissue but leaving midribs and major veins intact. Emerging adults continue to feed on viburnum.

Heavily attacked hosts can have every leaf skeletonized, causing dieback and eventual death. Plants nearly defoliated by spring-feeding larvae may initiate second growth but may be defoliated again by adult feeding in the summer. Defoliation for 2 to 3 consecutive years can be fatal, and consecutive feeding of larvae and adults within a season can hasten the death of the plant.



Feeding damage by VLB

Management

Options include: pruning out and destroying infested twigs before eggs hatch, monitoring the lower leaf surface for the presence of larvae in late spring, applying a registered insecticide according to label directions in the spring to manage small larvae, and planting less susceptible viburnums (contact your local Cooperative Extension office for more information).

References:

Viburnum Leaf Beetle Fact Sheet, University of Massachusetts, Amherst

<https://ag.umass.edu/landscape/fact-sheets/viburnum-leaf-beetle>

Viburnum Leaf Beetle, Exotic Pest Threats, University of Maryland Extension

http://extension.umd.edu/sites/extension.umd.edu/files/_docs/programs/ipmnet/VLB%20Fact%20Sheet-UMD.pdf

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