Redheaded Flea Beetle *Systena frontalis*

Redheaded Flea Beetle adult (above) and damage (right)   Photo credits: Alejandro Chiriboga UConn

In 2013 the Redheaded Flea Beetle, also known as the Cranberry Flea Beetle, was found in Connecticut nurseries feeding on various deciduous plants.

Identification

Adults are 3.5 to 5 mm long, shiny black and have a slightly reddish head. Thick hind legs allow adults to jump like a flea. Larvae are 5-10 mm long, creamy-white with a brown head capsule and a small projection on the last segment of the body.

Host Preference and Damage

Common ornamental hosts include Abelia, Coreopsis, Chelone, Hydrangea, Ilex, Itea, Rudbeckia, Salvia, Vaccinium, and Weigela, and has also been found on many different species of weeds.

Adults cause the most injury, especially to young tender foliage. Damage to leaves include holes or skeletonization, sometimes leaving the lower surface intact. Feeding can significantly impact bud development for the following year if populations are high. Larvae feed on roots and underground stems and only cause minimal damage to the plant.

Life Cycle

Eggs overwinter in the soil. Larvae hatch in the spring and pupate after completing their development. Adults emerge from the ground in late June or early July in Connecticut (~GDD 800-999), mate and lay the next generation of eggs in the ground.

Management

Plants should be monitored for the presence of adults or feeding damage. Since many weed species can be hosts, weed management can help lower the population. Foliar insecticide applications may be needed. Consult your local Extension Center for more information.

References:
Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station: **Redheaded flea beetle** factsheet by Hiskes R. CAES
http://www.ct.gov/caes/lib/caes/documents/publications/fact_sheets/entomology/redheaded_flea_beetle.pdf

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