

SCARLET LILY BEETLE - LILIOCERIS LILII

The Scarlet Lily Beetle may be a problem in only some areas of Canada but as our world gets smaller every day their territory seems to get larger. Each of us should be mindful of the symptoms so if you come across them in your own garden you'll know what to do. The new phrase of the day should be "Forewarned is Forearmed"!

SYMPTOMS

Damage done by the larvae will result in the whole leaf or parts of it looking skeletal. You might see piles of brown droppings on the underside of leaves. The plant will slowly disappear from the base of each leaf and then the whole stalk will be affected.

THE BEETLE ITSELF AND ITS LIFE CYCLE

The lily beetle is a striking red colour with black antenna, legs and head, slightly rounded with a humped back appearance and range in size from 6 – 10 mm. They over-winter in secluded, sheltered places like composts, the bases of their favourite plants and pretty much anywhere where debris has piled up and is left undisturbed. The adult red beetles emerge early in spring foraging for food and quickly find a mate. The female lays her eggs on the underside of the Lily and Fritillaria leaves in irregular lines. These reddish-brown lines start to appear in April-May and hatch within 4-8 days.

The young larvae that come from these eggs are slug-like in appearance and to ward off predators they cover themselves in their own excrement - they look like piles of bird droppings. The larval phase is the most damaging to the host plant; they start on the underside of the leaves and soon work their way up to every area of the plant. The larvae feed off the plant and grow for 16-24 days and then drop to the soil to pupate. New adults emerge 16-22 days later and are seen feeding in the garden throughout the remainder of the growing season.

CONTROL

Wear gloves to protect your hands and hand pick both the larvae and bright red beetles off of the Lilies and Fritillaries, 2-3 times a day in sunny weather. Be sure to have a bucket of soapy water on hand, possibly at the base of the plant, because the beetles can be hard to catch and if they happen to fall on the ground the bucket will be there for them to fall in and drown. Cultivate the soil around the lilies early in the season and

remove any hiding pests. Remove any decay and debris around these susceptible plants, as the beetle overwinters in spots that are secluded, dark and moist.

Products made from Neem Tree oil can be effective in repelling the adult and killing the larvae. Neem Tree extracts can be purchased as a liquid extract or as a whole oil product. An effective way of reaching all the leaves of the infected plants is to prepare your Neem solution in advance and then put on dishwashing gloves and over those put on a pair of cotton gardening gloves. Now put your hands in the Neem solution, until they are soaked, then cup your hands around the stem of the plant and move up. Be sure to soak the underside of each leaf on your way up the stem. This process will dislodge any eggs or larvae on the undersides and soak them with the Neem product. When you have done the whole plant you can remove the cotton gloves and squeeze the excess around the base of the plant to absorb into the soil and hopefully kill any remaining larvae that may have escaped. Put the gloves back on and repeat with the rest of your Lilies and Fritillaria. This process should be repeated every two weeks to really get some control over the population.

You can also try using the following Lily Beetle Recipe

- 1 tsp Neem Oil
- 1 tsp Diatomaceous Earth
- 2-3 drops dish soap
- ¾ litre very warm water

Mix well & pour into spray bottle. Shake well to keep in suspension. Spray on ALL SIDES of leaves. Mix a new batch with each application and repeat every 2-3 weeks.

GOOD HUNTING!

Keep in mind that the larvae and eggs will only be on Lilies and Fritillarias and they can be killed by the use of Neem products. The adult lily beetle itself is only repelled by Neem and needs to be removed off all plants by hand. The lily beetles start to emerge from the soil in April and May to lay eggs, so this is the best time to prevent the onslaught. This may seem like a lot of work but we think Lilies are worth putting up a good fight for and in the end if you've had enough, you can always grow plants look like Lilies but Lily Beetles don't like: Hemerocallis - Daylilies!