

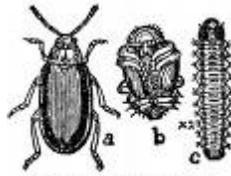


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Elm Leaf Beetle



Elm Leaf Beetle, p. 712.

William F. Lyon

Elm leaf beetles are plant feeders both in the adult and larval stage. They feed almost exclusively on elm trees, and the most damage is done by the larva, which skeletonizes the elm leaves. Elm leaf beetles occasionally become annoying in the home. Adult beetles enter structures during the autumn but may be most troublesome during the spring when they become active after hibernation in attempting to get back outside to elm trees. Although these beetles do not harm humans or their possessions, they are sometimes confused with carpet beetles and other household pests and considered a nuisance by their presence.

Identification

Adult elm leaf beetles are about 1/4 inch long, 1/8 inch wide and elongate oval in shape. Beetles vary from yellow when young to olive green when mature, with a black stripe along the outer edge of the wing covers. There are four black spots on the thorax. During the winter, many beetles fade in color and by spring appear dull to olive green with the edge stripes less distinct. Eyes are black and the antennae and legs are yellowish. Larvae are about 1/2 inch long and dull yellow with two dark stripes down the back. Pupae are about 1/4 inch long and bright yellowish-orange. Eggs are about 1/16 inch long, yellowish to orange, spindle-shaped and attached in clusters of 5 to 25 in two or three parallel rows on the undersides of elm leaves.

Life Cycle and Habits

Elm leaf beetles overwinter as adults in homes, buildings, wood piles, tree bark crevices, debris at the tree base and other protected places. During the spring, beetles leave their overwintering quarters, become active and fly to elms

(especially Chinese or Siberian elm) and American elm, and begin feeding on newly emerged leaves. Egg-laying begins in late May and early June, with each female laying between 400 and 800 eggs over her life span. Eggs hatch in about seven days. Small, black larvae feed on the leaves and mature in two to three weeks. Young larvae feed in groups and older larvae sometimes singly. Pupation occurs in tree bark crevices or on the ground in sheltered places, with new adults emerging about 10 days later. There are two or more generations per year depending on the season. Both adults and larvae feed on the elm foliage. Adults chew small, round, irregular holes in the leaf, whereas the larvae skeletonize, leaving only the vein intact. When damage is severe, leaves curl, dry out and fall prematurely.

Foliage feeding usually will not kill the tree but may weaken it, resulting in more susceptibility to branch dieback, attacks of bark beetles and borers, as well as disease organisms such as Dutch elm disease. However, elm bark beetles, not elm leaf beetles, transmit this serious fungus disease of American elm.

This information supplied by The Ohio State University Extension.