

Red Lily Leaf Beetle

The red lily leaf beetle (*Lilioceris lili*) is an insect native to Europe and Asia. Its primary targets are lilies and fritillaria.



DESCRIPTION

The adult beetle is 1/4" long and is bright scarlet red, with black legs, head, and antennae. The adult lays reddish-orange eggs which hatch into particularly unpleasant larvae, which look like little slugs, and are coloured orange, brown, yellow or green with black heads. The larvae cover themselves with their own excrement (known as a fecal shield) which is meant to repels predators. The larvae eventually become fluorescent orange pupae.

DAMAGE

If uncontrolled, the beetle can completely defoliate plants.

LIFE CYCLE



The adult beetle overwinters in the soil or plant debris and emerges in early spring looking for food and a mate. After mating, the female lays eggs in lines on the underside of



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Lilium or Fritillaria leaves. Some damage is done by the adults at this time, but the major damage comes when the eggs hatch into larvae in 7-10

days. The larvae voraciously consume all leaves within reach and may then start on flower buds. This continues for 2 to 3 weeks, when the larvae then drop into the soil and begin to pupate. In another 2 to 3 weeks the adult beetles emerge to start eating again. This process occurs from early spring to mid-summer. There can be up to 3 generations per year. The beetles are known to be strong flyers, which allows them to spread easily to neighboring gardens



CONTROL

- In spring monitor the undersides of leaves closely, and squish eggs as they appear.
- Handpicking the beetles and larvae appears to be the most effective. Larvae do the most damage, so concentrate on them. Carry a container with soapy water to drop them in. Beetles spook easily and are known to drop to the ground, with their black belly up which makes them difficult to spot against the soil. Place a light colored cloth or paper under the plants before picking in order to see them when they fall.
- If the damage is evident but you can't find the pest, dig just 1/2 inch below the soil surface around the plant - they are never deeper than that, and be ready to grab quickly when they pop out.



- Doktor Doom House and Garden residual spray is very effective at controlling adults. Spray tops and bottoms of leaves early in the season, when foliage is about 10-12" tall. Alternately, dust foliage with diatomaceous earth, this fine powder controls the beetle by dehydrating the beetle.

- In fall, after final frost, till the top inch of the soil where overwintering insects lie, and expose them for the backyard birds and beetles to consume.

For more tips on controlling pests and diseases in the garden, visit the What's Bugging section of greenlandgarden.com.

