

## **Green June Beetles Buzzing Everywhere**

### **AGRI-VIEWS**

by Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent

Last week we talked about Japanese beetles and the damage that they will do. In that column I mentioned that they shouldn't be confused with the much larger, and louder, green June beetle. While I'd been seeing green June beetles for several weeks, we apparently had a very large emergence of these a couple of weeks ago as everyone at the fair was asking me about them!

Unlike the non-native Japanese beetle, the green June beetle is a native species to Kansas. Thirty years ago I would have considered this beetle to be an uncommon local resident. I'd see a few every year but they would go un-noticed to most people. Then about 20 years ago I started to see a noticeable increase in the population of this species with the past five years being a literal population explosion. Given that this insect has long been a pest in the deep south, and that the larva feed on decaying organic matter, I suspect that the increasing amount of timber that we are seeing across the countryside, coupled with global warming has resulted in our seeing many more of these than we used to.

Green June beetles are big. The beetle is one inch long and roughly one half inch wide at the "shoulders". They are basically a dull velvety green with brownish or tannish marks around the thorax and wing covers. Although not often seen, the beetle has a short but stout horn on the front of their head. Beetles are the adult form and the larval form is the whitish grub we find when tilling flower beds or gardens. In the case of the green June beetle the grub can be two inches long. It is often found around decaying tree stumps or in piles of well rotted manure or compost. The live larvae are more likely to be found above ground than other grub species and have the peculiar habit of crawling on their back.

All beetles have wings and are capable of flying. We often don't see the wings because when they aren't flying their wings are tucked underneath the hard wing covers that we see on their back. Many times we only notice beetles when they are not flying so some people will be startled to see a beetle flying. Green June beetles are strong flyers but not graceful. It's like their navigation control isn't well connected to their flight control. They'll fly into the sides of building, pets, and people. They are also very noisy flyers, often giving homeowners the impression that they are seeing a large bee or wasp.

Green June beetles will feed on a variety of fruits as well as ears of corn. They are especially fond of peaches. They use the stout horn on their head to gouge into ripening fruit and then can often be found burying themselves into the fruit, often more than one per fruit. They essentially render the fruit useless. Unless you are trying to produce fruit, they don't do much other damage to plants.

This time of year the beetles are busy trying to find mates and the females are busy laying eggs. They prefer sandier soils but definitely soils high in organic matter in which to deposit their eggs. The female will burrow six to eight inches down into the soil to lay her eggs which hatch quickly and the small grub starts feeding this fall, finishing development next spring. They have one generation per year. You will often find beetles flying low over lawns; males are looking for unmated females, females are looking for a good place to lay eggs. Control measures aren't often needed but any of the lawn and garden pyrethroids will provide good control.