



## Flea Beetle



"Flea beetle" is a generic name applied to many species of small jumping beetles commonly seen early in the gardening season. Some species are general feeders while others have a more restricted host range. With most species of flea beetle, the adults over winter underground or beneath plant debris. During April and May, they become active, mate, and deposit eggs. Only the adults are commonly seen by gardeners and vegetable producers.

The adult flea beetle is oval, 1/16 to 1/5 inch long (0.15-0.5 cm), and varies in color from blue-green to black. These small jumping beetles have long hind legs. The larvae are delicate, whitish, slender cylindrical worms, not over 1/3 in. (0.8 cm) long. In canola, the Crucifer and Striped flea beetles feed on foliage, while in potatoes, the Tuber flea beetle is of greatest concern.

Potato flea beetles (*Epitrix cucumeris*) tend to be more oval, blackish, and about 1/16 inch long.

Striped flea beetles (*Phyllotreta striolata*) are more elongate and dark with yellowish crooked stripes, and measure about 1/12 inch long.

Spinach flea beetles (*Disonychia xanthomelaena*) are both oval and elongate. They have a black head, antennae and legs. The collar behind the head is yellow to yellowish-orange. Wing covers have blackish-blue luster. They approach 1/5 inch in body length.

Plants with flea beetle damage will have holes in their leaves, which look almost as if they have been shot they are so riddled with openings. The holes are usually about 1/8 inch in diameter but may join together to form larger openings. Seedlings are especially susceptible and in many cases whole plants can wither, wilt, and die if left untreated, regardless of age.

### Controls

Depending upon the flea beetle species involved, there may be some cultural home remedies or chemical treatments that you can apply to control these pests.

- Control  
Because flea beetles are sun loving, place worm bins in the shade. Make a sticky shield or box coated with tree tanglefoot and pass it over the worm bins to trap flea beetles leaping from disturbed compost.
- Home Remedies  
Flea beetle home remedies reported include the following:
  - A repellent foliage spray made with whole crushed garlic cloves.
  - Wood ashes sprinkled around plants, especially on potatoes.

© 2008 Happy D Ranch

The above content is the exclusive intellectual property of Happy D Ranch. Though it is permissible to print articles for personal educational use, they may not be replicated in part or whole in any form without obtaining our written permission. Individuals, groups or businesses infringing upon this copyright will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. Images and articles that are not Happy D Ranch originals have been used by permission.