

# Japanese Beetle

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The **Japanese beetle** (*Popillia japonica* commonly referred to as the jitterbug) is a beetle about 1.5 cm (0.6 inches) long and 1 cm (0.4 inches) wide (smaller in Canada), with shiny copper-colored elytra and a shiny green top of the thorax and head. It is not very destructive in Japan, where it is controlled by natural enemies, but in America it is a serious pest to rose bushes, grapes, canna, crape myrtles, and other plants.



It is a weak flyer and drops several centimeters when it hits a wall. Japanese beetle traps therefore consist of a pair of crossed walls with a bag underneath, and are baited with floral scent, pheromone, or both. However, studies done at the University of Kentucky suggest that traps attract more beetles than they actually trap, thus causing more damage than may have occurred were the trap not used.

Japanese beetles have a curious, identifying defense: they lift their hind legs up in the air, even when simply approached. These hind legs are spiny, and the behavior is probably intended to ward off predators.

These insects damage plants by eating the surface material, leaving the veins in place, producing a curious, but alarming to the experienced gardener, "transparent leaf" effect on its victims.