



## ***The Shady Hill Gardening Tips Series***

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### **Lily Leaf Beetle**

Have you ever wandered out into your garden one morning to find all your prized lilies stripped of all flowers and foliage, with nothing but a straight stalk sticking up in the air? Chances are, it is the notorious Lily Leaf Beetle.

This bright red beetle is a native of Europe, and was first discovered practically in our backyard in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1992. The beetle had been known to exist in and around Montreal, Canada, but experts believe the New England outbreak originated with a shipment of bulbs from Europe.

Since the LLB is a strong flier and lacks natural predators here, it has migrated north from Cambridge throughout coastal and central New Hampshire and into Maine.

The LLB will emerge from soil in early spring and lay its eggs on the underside leaves of young lily plants. The eggs will hatch within a week to 10 days, and females can lay up to 450 eggs, sometimes over two growing seasons. The eggs are laid in irregular rows of yellow/orange in a cylindrical formation, and the larvae look like small slugs with orange/brown/yellow bodies with a black head. They carry their dark excrement on their backs, and often times that is what you'll find left on your plants.

Larvae cause more damage than adults, feeding on the underside of the leaves before entering the soil to pupate.

New adults emerge from their orange pupae in approximately 16 to 22 days and will feed until fall. The adult beetles can over winter in the soil or plant debris in gardens or woods, often times a distance away from the host plants. Preferable environments are shaded, protected, cool, and moist. They do not mate or lay eggs until after they emerge the next spring.

There are a few ways to deal with this pesky pest. First is to closely inspect your lilies early in the morning and simply handpick the adults and/or eggs/larvae off and either crush them or throw them in a jar of soapy water.

As far as chemical controls, Sevin and Malathion can control the adults and larvae. Always read the label before applying pesticides, as many chemicals are toxic to other insects as well, such as bees.