



Viburnum Leaf Beetle

Pyrrhalta viburni Paykull (Coleoptera: Chrysomelidae)

The Viburnum leaf beetle (VLB) is an exotic invasive beetle that has spread from its introduction site in Ontario, Canada, southeast into the U.S., and is presently found in 9 states. VLB feeds on many species of viburnums in both natural and managed landscapes, heavily damaging and defoliating this popular landscape shrub. VLB spreads short-range by flight, and long-range by people moving infested nursery stock into non-infested areas.

IDENTIFICATION:

- Adult VLB are 1/5 to 1/4" long (4.5-6.5 mm). Females are larger than males.
- The head, thorax and elytra (wing covers) are generally brown; the shoulders of the elytra are darker.
- Adults have a golden sheen due to dense golden-grey pubescence (hair) covering the dorsal surface.
- Newly hatched 1st instar larvae are tiny (~1/25-1/12", or 1-2 mm long), greenish-yellow to off-white, and lack spots.



**Adult VLB
Actual Size:**



- All stages of larvae feed gregariously on viburnum foliage.



- 2nd and 3rd instar larvae are sub-cylindrical, with legs, yellowish-brown with a pattern of dark spots along their backs, and about 2/5" long (10-11 mm).



2nd (left) and 3rd (right) instar larvae showing markings down back.

What to Look For:

Both VLB larvae and adults feed voraciously on the foliage of viburnums. Viburnums grown in shade appear to suffer more feeding damage. Hosts heavily attacked by larvae can have every leaf skeletonized (leaf tissue is consumed but midribs and major veins are left intact). VLB is the only pest known to cause this type injury to viburnums. Plants nearly defoliated by spring feeding larvae may re-leaf, only to be defoliated by adults feeding in summer. Defoliation 2-3 consecutive years can be fatal, and consecutive feeding of larvae and adults within a season can hasten dieback and eventual death of the plant.

Symptoms of VLB infestation include:

- Skeletonized viburnum leaves in spring (May-June) from larval feeding.
- Immature larvae feeding together on underside of young, tender leaves near empty egg-laying sites on dead twig tips.
- Older larvae feeding on both the bottom and top surfaces of leaves; the larvae may drop off if disturbed.



Typical VLB larval feeding damage: skeletonized leaves in spring.

- Many oblong “shot” holes chewed through leaves in the summer and fall by adults.



Typical adult VLB feeding damage: oblong shot holes, summer/fall.

- Small brown beetles dropping off or flying away from the host plant if disturbed.
- Characteristic egg “caps” arranged in straight rows on undersides of terminal twigs, seen throughout the summer, fall and winter months.



Above: “capped” egg masses on a twig prior to larvae hatching out in late spring (by late April). Below: empty egg cavities with “caps” missing on viburnum twig, after larvae have hatched out.



- Defoliation, twig dieback, and eventual plant death.

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<http://hgic.umd.edu/faq/sendAQuestion.cfm>

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