

Know your foe before fight



Carla Keast

AROUND THE YARD

Not all bugs are pests. Before you take action, figure out what insect is causing the problem, when it is most vulnerable, and what your plan of attack is going to be. Add some patience because there are no quick-fix solutions.

Two top offenders this summer are aphids and red lily beetles.

Aphids spend most of their lifecycle in the wingless stage where they eat and reproduce repeatedly. Start checking your garden from early spring onward, and deal with them as soon as you see them. Aphids spend their time at the base of leaves and along stems where they suck the sap from the plant.

Spray the affected plant with the garden hose nozzle set to jet or the strongest pressure that the plant will withstand. In addition, sprinkling diatomaceous earth in the soil around the affected plants will deter any survivors from climbing back onto the plant. Regular treatment is essential.

Newer to our area is the red lily beetle. This pest is actually quite attractive, but don't be deceived. It's trouble for our lilies. Knowing the lifecycle is important in combating this pest. Adults overwinter in the soil around the base of lilies, emerge in the spring, and lay eggs on lily

leaves. The eggs are orange-like, and arranged in lines on the underside leaves. This stage lasts for about a week.

Larvae then emerge, and continue feeding on both the underside and top of leaves for two to three weeks. The egg and larval stage are the best times to attack, as neither eggs nor larvae are going anywhere fast. Wipe or pick them from the leaves, or remove and dispose of the affected leaves themselves. Insecticidal soap can also be used on the larvae.

At the end of the larval stage, the red lily beetle drops to the soil where it spends about three weeks and is virtually undetectable. It emerges as a brightly coloured red beetle and continues feeding on the lily foliage. It's most noticeable at this stage, and can be handpicked or if there are too many, sprayed with a pyrethrum based (0.5%) insecticide.

Next spring, stir up the soil around base of your lilies (a depth of just over one centimetre is all that is needed), and catch any emerging adults that may have overwintered there.

Battling insect pests requires tenacity. But knowing when the pest is most vulnerable will enable you to focus your energy with some hope of success. You are after all, one lone gardener; your foe is an expanding army.

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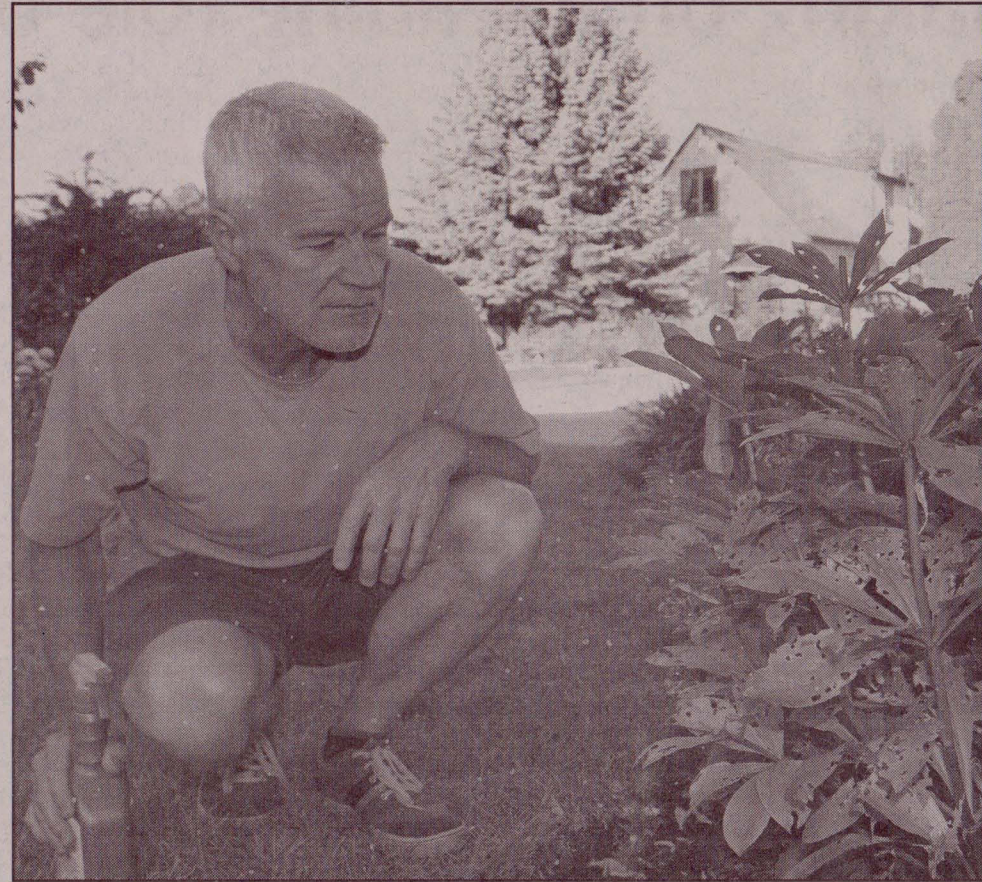


Photo by Matt Preprost

St. James resident David Wiebe surveys the damage to his lily garden caused by a surge of red lily beetles in the city.

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