

Column Name- The Heartland Minute

By: Ben Sims

K-State Research and Extension Greenwood County

Agriculture Extension Agent

*“Green June Beetles and Walnut Caterpillars”*

As gardens and other landscape foliage spread their summer glory, a pair of pests threaten to make the show a short one. Here comes into play the Green June Beetle and Walnut Caterpillar. Both are especially active this time of year.

Green June Beetle

Larvae are cream-colored grubs from one-quarter to 2 inches long, depending on the stage of molting. The adult beetle is nearly one-inch long with velvety-green, oval shaped bodies. The edges of the body are orange-yellow and the wing covers are reddish-brown.

Larvae feed on decaying organic matter and roots. As the grub tunnels below the ground, they can cause damage to lawn by feeding on the roots, pushing soil up through tunnels and creating small mounds of dirt at the surface.

Larvae may also feed on underground vegetables, such as sweet potatoes and carrots. Adult beetles may skeletonize leaves, primarily of fruit trees, but also oak and maple trees. They can also eat fruit on the trees.

Homeowners can discourage feeding by applying general-use insecticides, including carbaryl (Sevin Dust) and malathion. Always be sure to follow insecticide label instructions for application rates and wait period between application and harvest.

Walnut Caterpillars

Young larvae are yellowish-green and one-quarter inch long. As they mature, the larvae turn dark red, and eventually almost black. They may grow up to two inches long. A larval shed – resembling a hairball – might be seen on the trunks of trees. When provoked, the caterpillar will arch its head and tail in defense.

The adult moth is light brown with four light brown stripes on the forewings. The wingspan is almost two inches across. Larvae skeletonize plant leaves, while more mature larvae will consume the leaf entirely. They feed on a wide variety of deciduous trees, but tend to prefer walnuts, pecans and hickories.

Spinosad is an organic control option. Some options include Natural Guard Spinosad, Captain Jack’s Deadbug Brew, Bonide Colorado Potato Beetle Beater and Monterey Garden Insect Spray. Synthetic options include permethrin, malathion or cyfluthrin.

Information comes from Kansas State University horticulture expert, Cynthia Domenghini.