Alternative Controls for Japanese Beetles

Japanese beetle numbers appear to be up in many areas and plants could remain under siege til the end of July. Turf and ornamental insecticides containing pyrethroids (bifenthrin, cyfluthrin, cypermethrin, permethrin, etc) can provide very good long-term control.

However, these insecticides are harmful to pollinators and must not be applied to blooming plants. The extended residual effect of pyrethroids also applies to natural enemies. Damage to natural enemies can lead to problems with other pests, such as spider mites.

Because of this, many are interested in alternative approaches to Japanese beetle control. When talking about alternatives, remember no single solution fits all situations.

Physical protection. Drape fine netting over preferred host plants to deny beetles access to attractive plants. Monitor general beetle activity in order to remove the cover as early as possible.

Removal of buds and early blooms. Cut and bring highly attractive flowers, such as roses, indoors for enjoyment.

Prevent buildup. Volatiles produced by Japanese beetle-damaged plants attract more of these voracious insects. When practical, make early morning and afternoon visits to infested plants to knock beetles into a container of soapy water. Keeping Japanese beetle numbers low on plants means less plant damage, as well as less attraction to other Japanese beetles.

Insecticides. Pyola Insect Spray (pyrethrins and canola oil) and other pyrethrin sprays provide a broad spectrum of insect control alternative. Both active ingredients are contact insecticides that provide very short residual protection. As with all insecticides, follow the label directions on protecting pollinators.
Insecticidal soap and horticultural oils also provide contact control. Check the label for warnings regarding sensitive plants or restriction due to high temperature. Products based on extracts of hot peppers, oranges, garlic, and the physical protectant kaolin did not provide effective control in University of Kentucky trials.

**Do not use traps.** UK research has shown beetle traps to be ineffective. Large numbers of beetles will respond to the attractants but few are captured. This can result in greater damage than would have occurred without the traps.

For more information on Japanese beetles, contact the Pulaski County Extension Service at 606-679-6361.

Become a fan of [Pulaski County Horticulture](https://www.facebook.com/PulaskiCountyHorticulture/) on Facebook and follow [@hortagentbeth](https://twitter.com/hortagentbeth) on Twitter and kyplants on Instagram.

Join us for a class on Propagating Houseplants on July 12 at 6pm at the Pulaski Co Extension office. The class fee is $5. Pre-registration is appreciated.

The Lake Cumberland Master Gardeners have a new load of pine straw. Prices are $7 per bale. If you purchase 50 or above, bales are $6 each.

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