

# Pest Alert

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Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services,  
Division of Plant Industry

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## The Asiatic Garden Beetle, *Maladera castanea* (Arrow 1913) (Coleoptera; Scarabaeidae), a White Grub Pest New to Florida

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**INTRODUCTION:** This is the first report of the Asiatic garden beetle, *Maladera castanea* (Arrow), in the lower southeastern US coastal plain. This beetle has been a pest in the northeastern United States since the 1920s. The Asiatic garden beetle is occasionally numerous enough to cause damage to turf, gardens and field crops, as well as simply being a nuisance.

**IDENTIFICATION:** Asiatic garden beetles (Fig. 1) can be confused with native species of scarab beetles in the genus *Serica*. In general, Asiatic garden beetles are recognized by their robust body, 8-9 mm (1/3 inch) in length, reddish-brown color with iridescent sheen, hidden labrum, antenna with 10 segments (not 8-9), and strongly flattened hind tibia with apical spurs separated by the tarsal articulation.

Larvae are white grubs that are distinguished from other known US scarabs by their maxilla being laterally swollen and bulbous.

**DISTRIBUTION:** The Asiatic garden beetle is native to China and Japan. It became established in New Jersey around 1921 and has slowly expanded its range to most of eastern North America, west to Kansas and Missouri, but until recently records for Florida were lacking.

The first Florida collection was in the Black Creek Ravines Conservation Area, Middleburg, Clay Co., (30.08099oN, 81.84125oW), on 6 May 2012, by J. Garrison at light (three specimens). This is a remote natural area. The initial collection was soon followed by a collection at the 7600 block of Beaver Street of Jacksonville, Duval Co., on 11 May 2012, by G. Durrance (two specimens). These distant localities and its occurrence in a natural area indicate that the Asiatic garden beetle is established in northern Florida.

**HABITS:** Adults feed on leaves and flowers of more than 100 different plants. When infestations are heavy, they can eat leaves to the midrib. Larvae feed on roots of various plants. While usually considered to be a minor pest, larvae have been known to cause problems in ornamentals, turf, gardens, sweet potatoes, soy beans, corn and other field crops.

In the northern US, adults emerge in the summer from the end of June through October and are univoltine. The new Florida records confirm their earlier emergence here. It is not known whether they are univoltine or bivoltine in Florida.

**DETECTION:** Adults are active at night and can be found feeding on foliage and flowers. Adults are attracted to light, and can easily be monitored with light traps. Larvae must be dug from the soil or from potted plants.

**CONTROL:** Consult your county Agricultural Extension Office for the most recent control recommendations for the plants or crops in question.





**Fig. 1.** Lateral view of adult *Maladera castanea* (Arrow), Asiatic garden beetle.