



# Wild Blueberry

## FACT SHEET



### Blueberry Flea Beetle

(*Altica sylvia Malloch*)

Fact Sheet No. 200, UMaine Extension No. 2372

#### Description

The immature flea beetle is a black larva, 3/8-inch long when fully grown (Photo 1). The adult beetle is oval-shaped, shiny, coppery bronze, and less than 1/4-inch long (Photo 2). A common characteristic of flea beetle adults is their ability to jump suddenly when disturbed.

Pupae, which are rarely seen, are small, yellow-orange (Photo 3), and are found about 1/2-inch deep in the soil of blueberry fields.

#### Life Cycle

The blueberry flea beetle spends the winter as an egg in the litter near the base of the blueberry plants. Soon after the blueberry plants begin to develop in the spring (about mid-May), the eggs hatch and larvae start feeding on the foliage. The last larvae finish feeding in late June, and fully grown larvae move into the soil, where they remain as pupae. Adults begin to emerge in about two weeks and continue feeding on blueberry plants through late summer. Eggs are laid in July and August.

Actual size	Egg	Larva	Pupa	Adult

## **Damage and Economic Importance**

Infestations of blueberry flea beetle may be confined to isolated areas or damage may be widespread. Large numbers of flea beetles may completely defoliate large areas in both crop and pruned fields. Damaged leaves have a scalloped appearance around the edges (Photo 4).

Flea beetle larvae feed on blueberry leaves and blossoms from mid-May through June; the adults feed on foliage beginning in late June or early July.

## **Pest Management**

Burning may reduce populations of the blueberry flea beetle. This insect can also be controlled with an appropriate pesticide. For additional information on monitoring and control, refer to Wild Blueberry Fact Sheets Nos. 204 and 209, or contact the lowbush blueberry specialist, University of Maine Cooperative Extension, Orono, Maine, 1-800-897-0757 (toll-free in Maine) or 207-581-2923.

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