



Kudzu Beetle



Although he's the ***new kid in town***, don't roll out the welcome mat for this critter! The ***kudzu bug*** is about 0.25" in length (pea-sized), greenish brown, round and has a wide posterior. This *true bug* walks with a waddle, flies brilliantly (which helps account for its rapid spread across the Southeast!) and has the ability to destroy crops using its sucking mouth parts. Adults and immature insects (nymphs) gather in large groups and suck sap from stems of a host plant, weakening and stunting it. In addition to eating valuable crops such as soy beans and other legumes, the kudzu bug has a couple of other endearing traits. For one, it congregates on light-colored surfaces and overwinters in homes (like the much-hated Asian ladybeetle).

Property owners with nearby kudzu patches can expect to find the kudzu bug on the sides of their homes and in their cars. And, like the brown marmorated stinkbug which currently co-habitates with many of us, the kudzu bug emits an unpleasant odor when disturbed. Although the kudzu bug resembles the brown marmorated stink bug, it is actually in a different family.

For ***bugs inside your house*** or car, neither bug spray nor squashing (recall the foul odor they emit) are recommended. Minimizing the number of bugs that get into your home is the best tactic – the same measures that keep the Asian ladybeetle out are effective against the kudzu bug. If they do infest your home or car, use a vacuum to suck them up and change the bag when you finish. Keep in mind, if there is a patch of kudzu nearby, you will quickly get re-infested, so for a control program to be successful, it must also include kudzu removal. Fortunately, the bugs do not bite and do not eat houseplants. For ***bugs on your garden plants***, insecticidal soap works fairly well with complete coverage of the plant. Insecticides like bifenthrin or permethrin also provide good control.

***** This insect has only been in the U.S. for 3.5 years. More research is needed to find the most efficient, safe and economical way to deal with this new pest. Consult your local extension agent for proper pesticide use and application. (Scott Reiter 733-2686)***

