Viburnum Leaf Beetle
*Pyrrhalta viburni* Paykull (Coleoptera: Chrysomelidae)

The Viburnum leaf beetle (VLB) is an exotic invasive beetle that has spread from its introduction site in Ontario, Canada, southeast into the U.S., and is presently found in 9 states. VLB feeds on many species of viburnums in both natural and managed landscapes, heavily damaging and defoliating this popular landscape shrub. VLB spreads short-range by flight, and long-range by people moving infested nursery stock into non-infested areas.

**IDENTIFICATION:**

- Adult VLB are 1/5 to ¼” long (4.5-6.5 mm). Females are larger than males.
- The head, thorax and elytra (wing covers) are generally brown; the shoulders of the elytra are darker.
- Adults have a golden sheen due to dense golden-grey pubescence (hair) covering the dorsal surface.

- Newly hatched 1st instar larvae are tiny (~1/25-1/12”, or 1-2 mm long), greenish-yellow to off-white, and lack spots.

- 2nd and 3rd instar larvae are sub-cylindrical, with legs, yellowish-brown with a pattern of dark spots along their backs, and about 2/5” long (10-11 mm).

- All stages of larvae feed gregariously on viburnum foliage.

**What to Look For:**

Both VLB larvae and adults feed voraciously on the foliage of viburnums. Viburnums grown in shade appear to suffer more feeding damage. Hosts heavily attacked by larvae can have every leaf skeletonized (leaf tissue is consumed but midribs and major veins are left intact). VLB is the only pest known to cause this type injury to viburnums. Plants nearly defoliated by spring feeding larvae may refoliate, only to be defoliated by adults feeding in summer. Defoliation 2-3 consecutive years can be fatal, and consecutive feeding of larvae and adults within a season can hasten dieback and eventual death of the plant.
Symptoms of VLB infestation include:

- Skeletonized viburnum leaves in spring (May-June) from larval feeding.
- Immature larvae feeding together on underside of young, tender leaves near empty egg-laying sites on dead twig tips.
- Older larvae feeding on both the bottom and top surfaces of leaves; the larvae may drop off if disturbed.
- Small brown beetles dropping off or flying away from the host plant if disturbed.
- Characteristic egg “caps” arranged in straight rows on undersides of terminal twigs, seen throughout the summer, fall and winter months.
- Many oblong “shot” holes chewed through leaves in the summer and fall by adults.
- Defoliation, twig dieback, and eventual plant death.

To report a possible sighting, visit the UMD Extension Exotic Pest Threats Website: [http://extension.umd.edu/ipm/pest-threats](http://extension.umd.edu/ipm/pest-threats)