

With the approach of summer, homeowners and gardeners will notice the approach of one unwelcome creature in the landscape. Eastern lubber grasshoppers, also known as graveyard grasshoppers, are one of the few grasshoppers that can seriously damage agricultural and landscape crops. The lubber grasshopper is native to the southeastern and south central portion of the United States. Lubbers often invade residential areas and feast on flowering plants. These grasshoppers will migrate long distances to obtain preferred food, sometimes forming trails and following one another.

Lubber grasshoppers are known for both their size and unique coloration. Lubbers, like all grasshoppers, grow through successive stages after molting. Eggs are produced about a month after emergence of the adults. The eggs will hatch when exposed to warmer temperatures. After hatching, the nymphs (immature grasshoppers) crawl up out of the soil and begin feeding on plant material. The immature eastern lubber grasshopper differs dramatically in appearance from the adults. Nymphs typically are almost completely black, but with a distinctive yellow, orange, or red stripe located dorsally. Adult males and females are usually 2 to 3" long. The general color of adults is dull yellow with varying degrees of black spots and markings.

Lubber grasshoppers will often develop initially in moist areas around ponds and irrigation ditches, and then later migrate to homes, yards, and crops. Rather than waiting for the grasshoppers to come to you, it is often best to take the battle to them. The young grasshoppers remain clustered in groups, but as they get older they are more likely to be solitary. The ideal time to get rid of them is when they are together in large groups. In most cases the homeowner can easily rid oneself of any individual lubbers by hand. You can throw them into a bucket of soapy water or a trash bag to kill them.

If there are too many to control by hand-picking, insecticides can be applied. Lubber grasshoppers are not easy to kill, even with insecticides, once they become large. If chemical control is necessary, several insecticides are registered for use on ornamentals to control grasshoppers. They include: Carbaryl/Sevin (Drexel Carbaryl), Cyfluthrin (Decathlon, Tempo), Bifenthrin (Talstar). You likely will have to apply the insecticide directly to the insects; the small amount of insecticide residue remaining on sprayed plants may not be adequate to kill the grasshoppers. Make sure the insecticide used is safe on the plant before spraying and double-check label directions if spraying close to a water body.

By taking a proactive approach now, you can lessen the damage these unwelcome guests cause to your landscape and gardens. For more information about this or other topics contact your local extension office or Sara Rogers in the Jackson Parish Extension Office.