



ENTFACT-625

SOLDIER BEETLES

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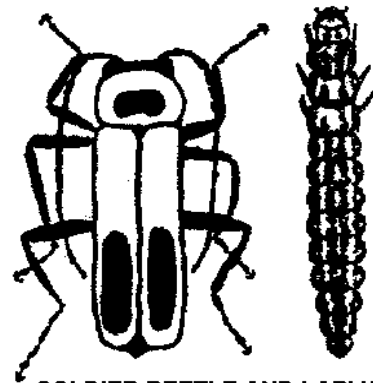
Soldier beetles, also known as leatherwings, get their name from the soft, clothlike wing covers, which when brightly colored are reminiscent of uniforms. These beetles are elongate, soft-bodied and about 1/2" long. Colors of soldier beetles vary from yellow to red with brown or black wings or trim. A common and easily-spotted species is the Pennsylvania leatherwing, which is yellow with one large black spot on each wing.

Soldier beetles resemble lightning bugs but do not have light-producing organs. Another group of beetles that may be confused with soldier beetles are the blister beetles, which are pests, but blister beetles have a square-shaped head and a very visible "neck."

Adult females lay their eggs in clusters in the soil. The larvae are velvety, covered with dense bristles, and have antenna-like projections on their head. Most larvae are carnivorous, feeding on insects in the soil. Larvae overwinter in damp soil and debris or loose bark.

The adults are also predators, eating caterpillars, eggs, aphids, and other soft-bodied insects. They will alternatively eat nectar and pollen if no insects are around. They do not damage plant foliage. Adults are often found on flowers such as goldenrod, where they lie in wait for prey, feed on pollen and mate.

Since soldier beetles are beneficial, it is inadvisable to kill them. They may be a nuisance in the fall, if large numbers of larvae enter a house in search of a place to overwinter. Weather-stripping and caulking will pest-proof a home. A vacuum cleaner will safely remove soldier beetles that are found inside.



SOLDIER BEETLE AND LARVA