

## **What are those small oval-shaped black bugs with reddish markings?**

We have had several calls about these recently, mostly in crops, often on soybeans and sometimes in gardens. People reports seeing large numbers of small, blackish "beetles" with red markings. While they resemble beetles, they are actually bugs. You may see the egg masses, a fair-sized cluster of barrel-shaped eggs laid on the foliage, and small dark colored newly hatched bugs nearby. We see them mostly on or just under the soil surface, but they are probably more noticeable when they are on the foliage of small or low growing plants.

They are reported to feed on developing seeds of nettles and plants in the mint family. Henbit is our most common mint, and we suspect this is where the burrowing bugs are building up during the spring. No one seems to notice them until after the henbit has matured and the bugs are spreading out in search of other suitable hosts Nymphs are small, round to oval-shaped black -colored bugs with red markings on the upper side of the body. Larger ones are about 1/8 to 3/16 of an inch in length. They bear a resemblance to stink bugs. The adults are shiny with a narrow white border around the outside margin of the wings. They may appear anytime from May to August.

Large congregations of burrowing bugs certainly get your attention, but they rarely, if ever, cause crop damage.

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