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## **Cuphea Chewers!**

## Is your Mexican heather, Cuphea hyssopifolia, shrinking?

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There are at least 2 different species of leaf beetles munching away on Cuphea! The most abundant is a 3/16 inch long metallic blue leaf beetle (*Altica* sp.). The second and also abundant species (*Colaspis* sp.) is a more robust beetle that is tan with black lines. Because they are small and kind of blend into the foliage, put a piece of paper under the branches and tap them to see what critters land on the paper. Beetles could then be physically removed or drowned in a bucket with soapy water. But they tend to jump and escape. If there is more than 15% of the canopy damaged, spray an insecticide that contains Sevin or permethrin.





Altica leaf beetle eggs (left photo) are yellow and spindle shaped; larva (right photo) is dark gray-black.

Another pest on the Cuphea twigs that is easily overlooked is a small scale, the lesser snow scale. This little white scale should be managed with a 2% horticultural oil solution. Hibiscus are plagued by this little scale, so be sure to inspect the Cuphea patch to see if they are hiding out there where they can build up and then invade the hibiscus.

For more information on home gardening, contact the Collier County Cooperative Extension Service, Master Gardener Plant Clinic, at 353-2872. The Plant Clinic is open Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 9 a.m. to noon, and 1 p.m. to 4 p.m., and Wednesdays, 9 a.m. to noon.