

Geiger tree tortoise beetle (*Physonota calochroma floridensis*)



Geiger tree
(*Cordia sebestena*)
in flower.



"Colony" of young beetle
larvae.



Adult Geiger beetles.

If your Geiger tree (*Cordia sebestena*) is looking a little singed and frayed, take a closer look at the undersides of the leaves for the ugly larvae and the attractive adults of this Geiger tree leaf beetle. This beetle feeds on the orange-flowering Geiger tree but apparently, not on its cousin, the white-flowering wild-olive (*Cordia boissieri*).

Symptoms: The larvae and adults feed on the foliage. When larvae are small, they take the team work approach and skeletonize the leaves. As they grow, they tend to feed solo. Trees may suffer only slight feeding damage and premature leaf drop. However, if feeding exceeds 50% of the canopy, flowering may be reduced the following year.

Identification: The adult is a little under 1/2 inch long and is a dull tan and black as it first emerges from the pupal stage. After the exoskeleton hardens, it becomes a shimmering golden-green. The larvae resemble miniature dragons with lateral spines and they are covered with slime and feces.

What to do: Larvae become active as early as mid-April in this area and there may be three or more generations up into September. If caught early, leaves with larvae can be individually removed. If damage is greater than 50% of the canopy, you may choose to spray. If the larvae are small (less than 3 mm) try horticultural mineral oil. If adults and larger larvae are present try the various spinosad or permethrin containing pesticides or Sevin (carbaryl). Some landscapers have reported that a root drench of Merit (imidacloprid) is effective. This treatment would have to be done early in March before damage occurs.

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