

CACTUS LONGHORN BEETLE

By Sue Hakala

If there's ever a bug that cactus growers hate, it's the shiny black, hard-bodied cactus longhorn beetle. About a scary inch long, they are active all year feasting on succulent cactus tissue. They prefer cactus that are easy to get to without a lot of dense spines, but can work their way into chollas and prickly pears with no problem.

A female will lay single eggs in many different cacti. The brown-headed pale larvae burrow into the cactus and eat, eat, eat. They push out a semi-liquid greenish substance at their entrance hole, which will turn black. This is their calling card alerting you to their presence, if you haven't already seen the entrance hole. If left on their own, the cactus will die, sometimes looking like it's melting.

The larvae then winter in cells they construct around the base of the cactus. Adults emerge in late spring and early summer feeding at night on the young pads.

The best bet to control cactus longhorn beetles is to seek-and-destroy just after sunrise and at sunset, especially in early summer. You may notice them even more when the monsoon starts, as they are more likely to be on the go. The cactus longhorn beetle is easy to catch, as they have no flying wings. Then, use the stomp method.