

# ROSE CHAFER

Coleoptera: Scarabaeidae

*Macrodactylus subspinosus*

Bug  
of the  
Month



**Background.** Rose chafer is a beetle that feeds on many types of plants such as trees, shrubs, and fruit crops including cherry, strawberry, apple, and grape. As a grape pest, they can feed on the foliage, blossoms, buds, and even developing berries, which reduces grape yields. When feeding on foliage, the rose chafer eats around the veins of large leaves (similar to the Japanese Beetle), giving them a skeletonized appearance. Rose chafer is distributed throughout the eastern U.S. and is more severe in vineyards with sandy soils and abundant grass, as these are the

preferred sites for females to lay their eggs.

**Biology.** Rose chafer beetles only have one generation per year. The adult is about 0.5 inches long, light sandy-colored, with a dark brown head, and spiny legs. Adults can live for three to four weeks after emerging from the soil in late May or early June, which typically coincides with the bloom of grapevines. After emergence, they congregate on plants to mate and feed. The females lay eggs below the ground surface, preferring well-drained soils covered by grass. The eggs are about 0.04 inches in

length, oval and shiny-white. Those eggs hatch into small, white c-shape grub larvae that feed on grass roots through the summer. As the temperature drops, they crawl deeper into the soil, where they overwinter until the next season. In spring, they move from the deep soil to the surface to feed on grass roots again, pupate, and emerge as adults to start the cycle again.

**Quick fact:** Rose chafers contain toxins that can be poisonous to birds and some small animals. This works as a defense strategy since these animals avoid eating them.

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