

Week of June 26

GRUBS BE GONE

It was a disgusting sight. A gorgeous peony resembled a ballerina's tutu that had been shredded with a cheese grater. Masses of beetles chomped away at its fragile remains. A friend observed that there were certainly a lot of beetles around this season.

When an unsummoned food chain hits your garden, your mission is to become both a sleuth and a predator.

Here's a sleuthing tip. Those beetles are probably connected to grubs that are connected to moles. Japanese, June and Masked Chafer beetles produce larvae or grubs, charmingly described by one gardener as "those c-shaped, icky, off-white things with a dark head." Grubs eat roots that damage your plants. Where grubs have staked a claim, moles are probably tunneling around too because up to 2/3 of a mole's diet is grubs.

That's the sleuth part. Now enter the predator. You have to get rid of the larvae-producing beetles. You probably know by now that beetle traps don't work. They just attract more beetles near your roses. And as an organic gardener you don't want to use pesticides.

While nothing is foolproof, there are two main biological agents that help to get rid of the grubs: Milky Spore and Nematodes. For the most effective eradication, use both! And apply them now or in the beginning of July. Milky Spore (*Bacillus papillae*) is a disease that infects the larvae (grubs) of the Japanese beetle. It is a good long-term treatment because it takes 2-4 years for maximum effectiveness. But you only need one application. Parasitic Nematodes works fast within days, and they help rid your yard of both the Japanese and Masked Chafer grubs.

So get them both and enjoy a flat lawn and pretty roses this year!

Mother Nature needs all the coddling we can give her. www.WoodstockGardenClub.org