



Dear Rochelle,
I found beetles (see pic) in some recently purchased peat moss! Is it a problem?
Buggy from Rutland

Dear Buggy,
From the picture I would guess that your visitors are a type of blister beetle, but you will need to confirm this with Tracy Hueppelsheuser (Tracy.Hueppelsheuser@gov.bc.ca 604 556-3031), the BC Plant Health Unit entomologist, to be sure. Blister beetles like this are not common, although they can be found in BC, but they do not seem to threaten any particular crop. However, there are reports that large populations of adults can defoliate various crops including beans,

peas, potatoes, squash, tomatoes, potatoes, sugarbeets, cabbage, canola, fababeans and turnips.



On the other hand, some blister beetles feed on grasshopper eggs; so if you have a resident grasshopper population you may have just found the perfect solution! Do note though, it is only the first larval stage of the blister beetle which munches down on grasshopper eggs. Supposedly the adult females tend to lay their eggs close to grasshopper eggs to assure a feed source for their offspring. There is only one hatch per year of blister beetles, which is not surprising.

The bad news is that all species of blister beetles produce some level of cantharidin, a fast absorbing toxin, which can cause internal and external blistering/inflammation. Horses are most susceptible to the toxin, while sheep and cattle are more tolerant. Usually livestock are exposed when consuming infested alfalfa hay. Let's hope you have the good ones. Rochelle