

Florida Predatory Stink Bug

Dec2011 BAMGA Bug of the Month

by Master Gardener Jim



Adult Florida Predatory Stink Bug

Our “bug” of the month - the “Florida Predatory Stink Bug” – is actually, believe it or not, a “good guy”, a beneficial insect. I know.....not another stink bug!.....but I discovered this one in my garden and didn’t recognize it as a stink bug at first. Looking at its long, spear-looking proboscis, I thought it was probably a predator but didn’t realize it was a stink bug. It also has another common name, “Halloween Bug”.

Its classification includes:

- Class: Insecta (insects)
- Order: Hemiptera (true bugs, cicadas, hoppers, aphids)
- Family: Pentatomoidae (stink bugs)
- Genus: Euthyrhynchus
- Species: floridanus (Florida Predatory Stink Bug)

The adult of this distinctive stink bug is black with orange or red patterns. It ranges, geographically, from the U.S. (north to Pennsylvania, west to Missouri) to Costa Rica. In the southeast, its season is June-November, and in Florida, it can be found year-round.

Our Florida Predatory Stink Bug’s food source is other insects, including other stink bugs. It is considered a beneficial insect because most of its prey consists of plant-damaging bugs, beetles and caterpillars. Some of the “bad guys” it feeds on include all stages of the Mexican Bean Beetle, and larvae of the Cutworm and Tobacco Budworm, the Wax Moth and the Colorado Potato Beetle. The Florida Predatory Stink Bug jabs its prey with its proboscis, injecting a toxin that slowly immobilizes its prey; then, the feeding begins.

An interesting note: This stink bug exhibits an unusual “wagging” motion as it rocks its body from side to side while gripping its prey with its feet. This unusual rocking motion is thought to be a defensive behavior.



The nymph stages of the Florida Predatory Stink Bug and, to some extent, the adults, are gregarious and will attack large prey in groups. Nymphs and adults, together, may attack larger prey.



This is one of the more attractive stink bugs with its three orange/red spots on a black/metallic blue background. There is a reddish spot at each corner of the scutellum, and the under-belly is orange/red. This coloration, in general, makes it easily distinguished from other stink bugs in the southeast.

The adults overwinter in dry sheltered areas. Eggs are laid en masse (20-90) with individual eggs somewhat barrel-shaped. Eggs hatch in 19-33 days, taking a long time to develop, having five instar stages (40-67 days). This is much longer than plant-feeding stink bugs, a possible benefit for the gardener.



If you see this “good guy” in your garden, give it a salute!

Jim