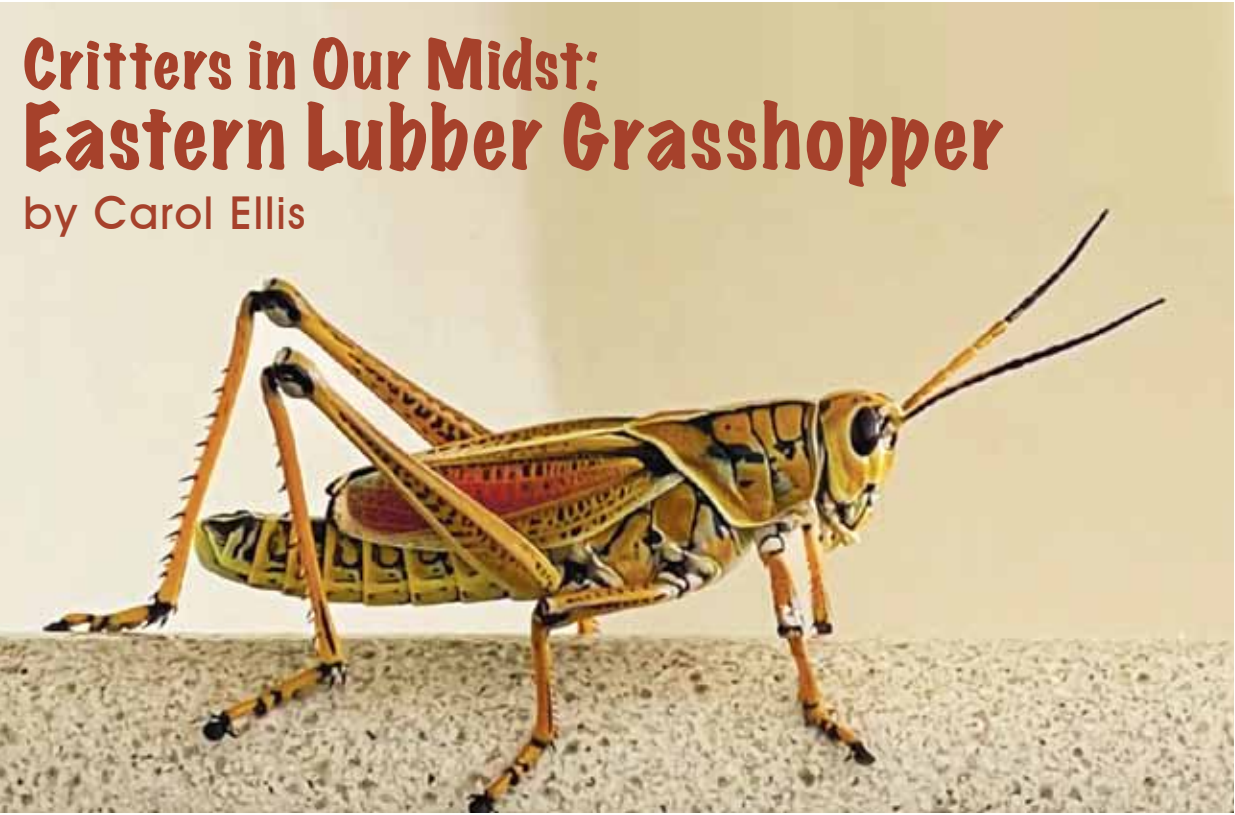




Portrait of an adult Lubber Grasshopper. Photo by Linda Adams

Hey there fella... what's your name? You have big hind legs... shall I call you "Jumper?"

"No," the critter replies... "Those days are over for me. Oh to be a nymph again!"

Well how about "Chomper?" Your appetite for greenery is doing a number on my lily plants.

"Sorry 'bout that... a grasshoppers' gotta do what a grasshoppers' gotta do to survive."

Okay... well move along and we'll see you next year.

These beautiful, colorful creatures usually show up in my garden in the Spring. Their population is small, so I tolerate them; for the sake of a few chewed leaves, we can easily coexist.

Lubber grasshoppers (Romalea microptera) are native to Florida and the Southeastern U.S. including North and South Carolina, Georgia, and west through Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, to central Texas.

Adult Lubber grasshoppers are primarily yellow with orange and red markings. The juvenile nymph (immature) grasshoppers look totally different than the adults, and are almost completely black with a red stripe. Adults attain a large size, males measuring 1-1/2" - 2" in length and females often measuring 2" - 3-1/2".

Lubber is derived from an old English word which means lazy or clumsy. Juveniles are more nimble and will jump away if approached. The adult grasshopper is a very poor jumper, and is usually seen walking, or climbing to feed on foliage at the tips of branches. They have wings, but cannot fly. Since the adults basically sit on the leaf, even when approached, it is easy to lift them off the plant by pinching their two hind legs between your thumb and index finger. You can then relocate the critter to a place where it can do no further damage to your plants.



Lubber nymphs are usually very lethargic and easily handpicked. Their black coloration makes them look like a different species than the adult stage.

Unfortunately for the Lubber grasshopper, most people's first reaction when they see one is of terror. Jurassic monster!!! Dinosaur war!!! Exterminate it!!!

I can understand that grasshoppers are disliked by farmers because huge swarms can wipe out a farmer's crop. Farmers care more about feeding people than insects, so in this case it may be appropriate for the farmer to use chemicals to prevent crop loss and economic hardship.



Closeup view of the Adult Lubber Grasshopper head.

Grasshoppers have few natural enemies. Their bright colorful pattern is believed to be a warning to predators, that they are not palatable.

In the home landscape grasshoppers can be seen early in the morning and in late afternoon feeding in flower beds, defoliating amaryllis, crinum and other lilies, oleander, butterfly weed, canna, Mexican petunia and lantana. Their veggie garden preference includes lettuce, kale, peas, beans and cabbage. So I get it! So how can we be humane while dealing with these critters in trying to salvage our home garden? You can hand pick and relocate. Another more final solution is handpicking and placing in a bag to be then placed in the freezer.

Eastern Lubber Grasshopper... CONTINUED - *Photos by Carol Ellis except as noted.*



Caught in the act of chomping on lily foliage.

In general, these critters do not kill plants. What they chew on will return. For example, at a local nature park I frequent, I was shocked to see dozens of dead adult Lubber grasshoppers lying in the flower beds. This is a native, natural garden. It is non-manicured. So what harm is there to co-existing with a few grasshoppers? They are amazingly beautiful.

How could anyone kill such a beautiful species?



This grasshopper was exterminated while doing its thing in a natural park area. Why?



Pay attention young grasshopper. Act with knowledge and compassion. Though man is the king of the jungle and can do what he pleases, carefully consider the fate of the grasshopper in the home and natural landscape.

There is a reason for the grasshopper's existence, otherwise would it have been created?

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Currently a Master Gardener volunteer, Carol has a degree in Journalism from the University of Florida and is the resident photographer /artist at Ocean Reef Club.



Adult Lubber Grasshopper.

On the Grasshopper and the Cricket

By John Keats

The poetry of earth is never dead:

When all the birds are faint with the hot sun
And hide in cooling trees, a voice will run
From hedge to hedge about the new-mown mead
That is the Grasshopper's - he takes the lead
In summer luxury, he has never done
With his delights; for when tired out with fun
He rests at ease beneath some pleasant weed.
The poetry of earth is ceasing never:
On a lone winter evening, when the frost
Has wrought a silence, from the stove there shrills
The Cricket's song, in warmth increasing ever,
And seems to one in drowsiness half lost,
The Grasshopper's among some grassy hills.

