

# Kudzu Bug

By Joseph LaForest and Wayne Gardner

The southeastern U.S. has been afflicted with a new invasive insect, *Megacopta cribraria*, commonly known as the kudzu bug because of its preference for the invasive kudzu weed. Unfortunately, its impact extends to many other targets including soybean crops, homes and people.

The kudzu bug was first discovered in nine northeastern Georgia counties in October 2009. This was the first record of its occurrence outside its native range in Asia. The insect has rapidly spread over 500,000 km<sup>2</sup> in the southeastern United States. Surveys now confirm its occurrence in all of South Carolina, most of Georgia and North Carolina, a substantial portion of Alabama, and in some areas of Virginia, Tennessee, Mississippi and Florida.

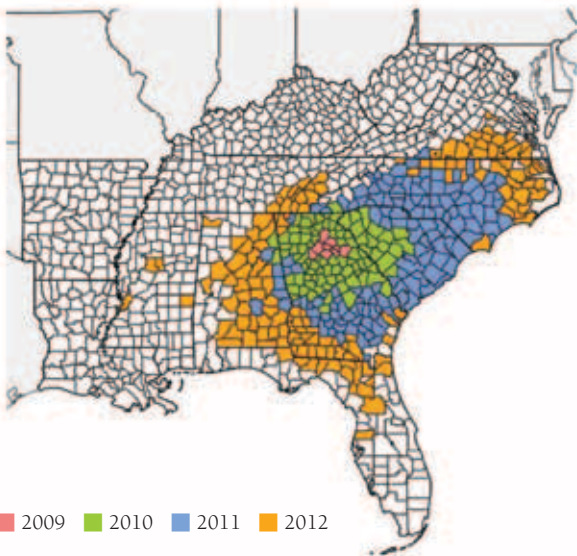
The adults are highly active in the fall and spring, aggregating on lightly-colored surfaces including homes, vehicles and clothing. They produce a defensive chemical that has a mildly offensive odor, can stain clothing and other fabrics, and causes localized skin irritations on some individuals.



JOE EGER, DOW AGROSCIENCES, COURTESY OF BUGWOOD.ORG (UGA)

Kudzu bug (*Megacopta cribraria*) is 3–5 mm long.

## DISTRIBUTION MAP



The kudzu bug's preferred plant host in the southeastern U.S. is kudzu, but it also feeds on other legume plants including soybean. Soybean yield reductions averaging about 20% have been recorded in field studies conducted in 2010-13. Trading partners in Central America are concerned about the insect invading their region via exports from infested areas in the United States. Interceptions of insects on container shipments and commercial air flights have impeded trade and commerce. This threat to international trade has trumped the impacts of the bug on kudzu. Researchers reported a 1/3 reduction in kudzu biomass over the 2010 growing season.

UGA's Center for Invasive Species and Ecosystem Health launched its Kudzu Bug ([www.kudzubug.org](http://www.kudzubug.org)) website on June 28, 2012 to provide up-to-date information on kudzu bug. The website works together with the Southeast Early Detection Network smartphone app (<http://apps.bugwood.org/seedn.html>) to let people report new sightings and have them verified by experts. Real-time reporting from the field combined with new research on how to manage this pest in the landscape is our best hope for minimizing the losses from this new invader.

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