



**The Chinese rose beetle (*Adoretus sinicus*)** is a common pest in the Cook Islands. It is a polyphagous (eats many plant species) beetle that can cause severe damage to crops, ornamental plants and trees in Southeast Asia and most Pacific islands. The beetles are known to feed on more than 250 plant species including economically important plants such as taro, broccoli, cabbage species, corn, green beans, star fruit, ginger, eggplant, jack fruit, sweet potato, strawberry, cucumber, persimmon and okra. Adults are 10-12mm long, oval shaped, reddish-brown coloured, with many fine hairs that make them appear grey.



The Chinese rose beetle (*Adoretus sinicus*) feeding on leaves at night and typical damage caused by them (photos: Mike Bowie)

The adults can cause significant defoliation between the veins of leaves where high numbers occur. The beetles are nocturnal and best observed an hour or so after sunset when they emerge to feed from their daytime hideaways in the soil, under bark, or in leaf litter. Adults are good fliers and are attracted to light at night. Larvae are found in rich soil, leaf litter or compost, and are white, C-shaped grubs that grow to about 12mm in length. The larvae are not considered pests like the adult beetles, but an account in the literature suggests that they may feed on seedlings. Development from egg to adult takes about 6-7 weeks.

Control of the pest is difficult given a large proportion of its life is spent as a larva in the soil. Working the soil does expose the larvae to myna birds and chickens which is likely to reduce numbers of the pest. Hand-picking beetles at night may work for a small number of plants but is not practical for large crops. However, research in Hawaii suggests that neem-treated host plants have significantly reduced feeding damage by Chinese rose beetle for four weeks. Several natural enemies have been introduced into Hawaii as biological control against the Chinese rose beetle, however these appeared to have limited control on the pest.

A very similar looking beetle and closely related species called the rose beetle (*Adoretus versutus*) is also found in Rarotonga and has similar behavior and ecology to that of *Adoretus sinicus*.

