UC Cooperative Extension
University of California
Agriculture & Natural Resources

Cucumber Beetle Monitoring Summary 2025

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Background

Cucumber beetles (CB) were reported as a key insect pest causing economic damage in diversified vegetable systems in the North Bay Area. In collaboration with local growers, yellow sticky traps were installed at Front Porch Farm (Healdsburg) and Longer Table Farm (Sebastopol) to monitor CB populations over time during the 2025 growing season. Monitoring was conducted by the UCCE Sonoma County Field Technician, Paolo Solari. Monitoring data can be used to help inform grower decision making when implementing Integrated Pest Management (IPM) strategies. Results illustrate similarities and differences in population dynamics over time at two farms in the region.

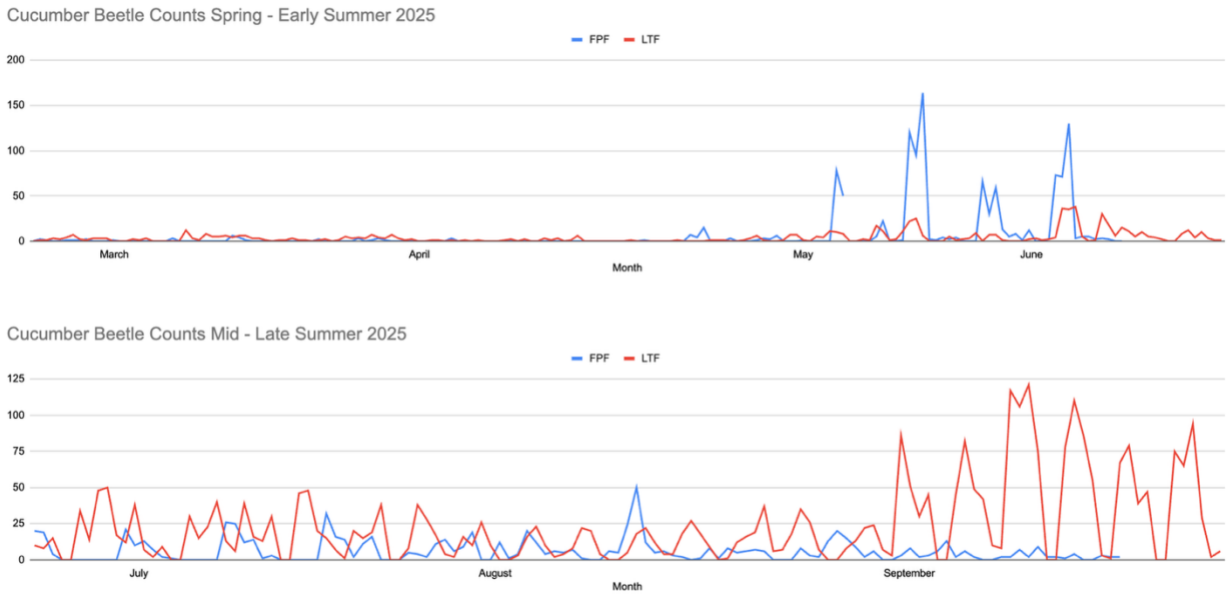
Results

Front Porch Farm Trap Locations

When CB counts were averaged across 25 time points during the growing season at Front Porch Farm (FPF), traps 1 through 3 in the map above had the highest counts on average. Squash was planted at these locations. Here, farmer Susannah Ashkenas noted that the squash was the first highly appealing crop for CBs early in the season and likely attracted them as an early food source. This probably enabled them to get established there and get a head start in the reproductive cycle. Counts at these traps were roughly 10 times higher than the other traps. At Longer Table Farm (LTF),

traps 1 through 3 and 7 through 10 in the map below had the highest counts on average across 27 time points. These traps were in the middle and at the south edge of the lettuce field, and in cut flowers. Counts at these traps were roughly 5 times higher than the other traps overall.

Longer Table Farm Trap Locations



Figures 1a and b. Cucumber beetle counts at both farms from spring to early summer (top) and mid to late summer (bottom).

At both farms, CBs were present in March and April, but populations remained relatively low until mid-May (Figure 1). During this time frame, FPF averaged around 1 CB per trap and LTF averaged around 2 CB per trap, both with some occasional high counts. Sporadic spikes in populations occurred throughout late May and June. We ran out of traps in late June, so no data from mid-June to mid-July was collected. In June, FPF averaged around 26 CBs per trap while LTF averaged around 8 per trap. We received and installed more traps in early July. Populations rose and fell throughout July and August largely in the 0 to 50 per trap range at both farms. In August, FPF averaged around 7 per trap and LTF averaged around 14 per trap. In September, CB counts picked up at LTF with an average of 34 per trap and large spikes throughout the month, while FPF averaged 5 per trap.

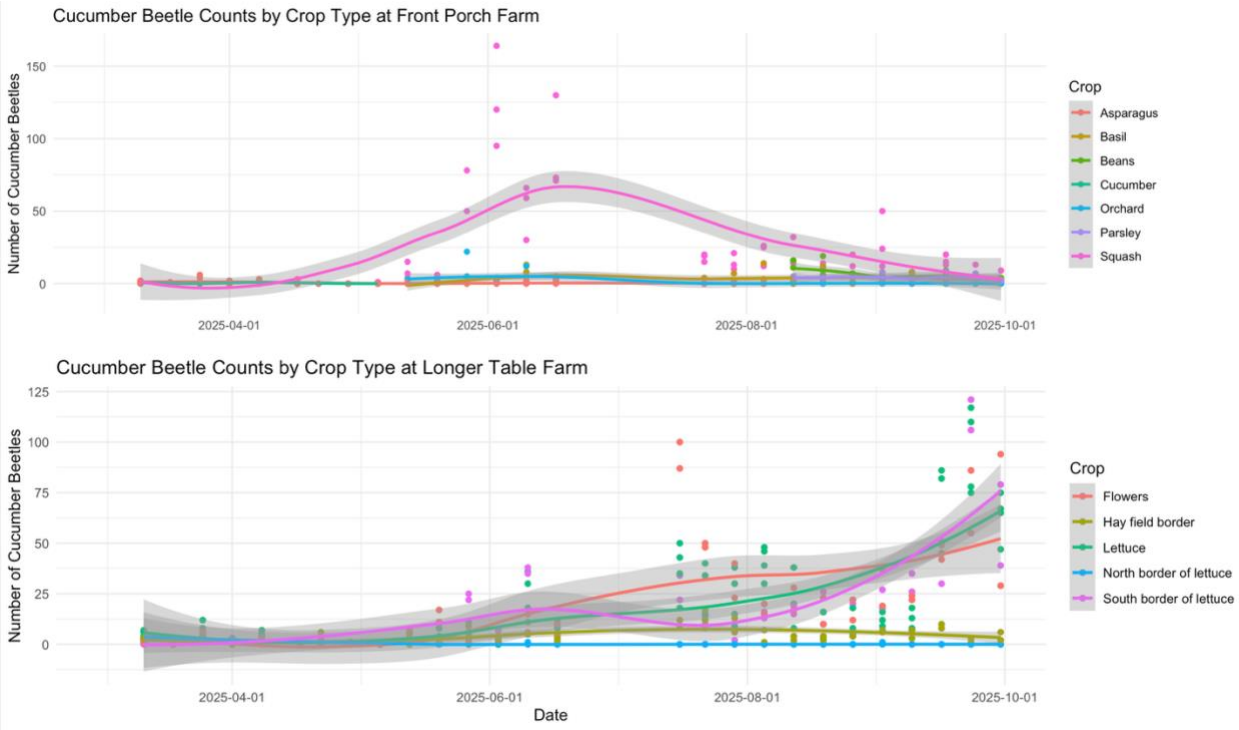
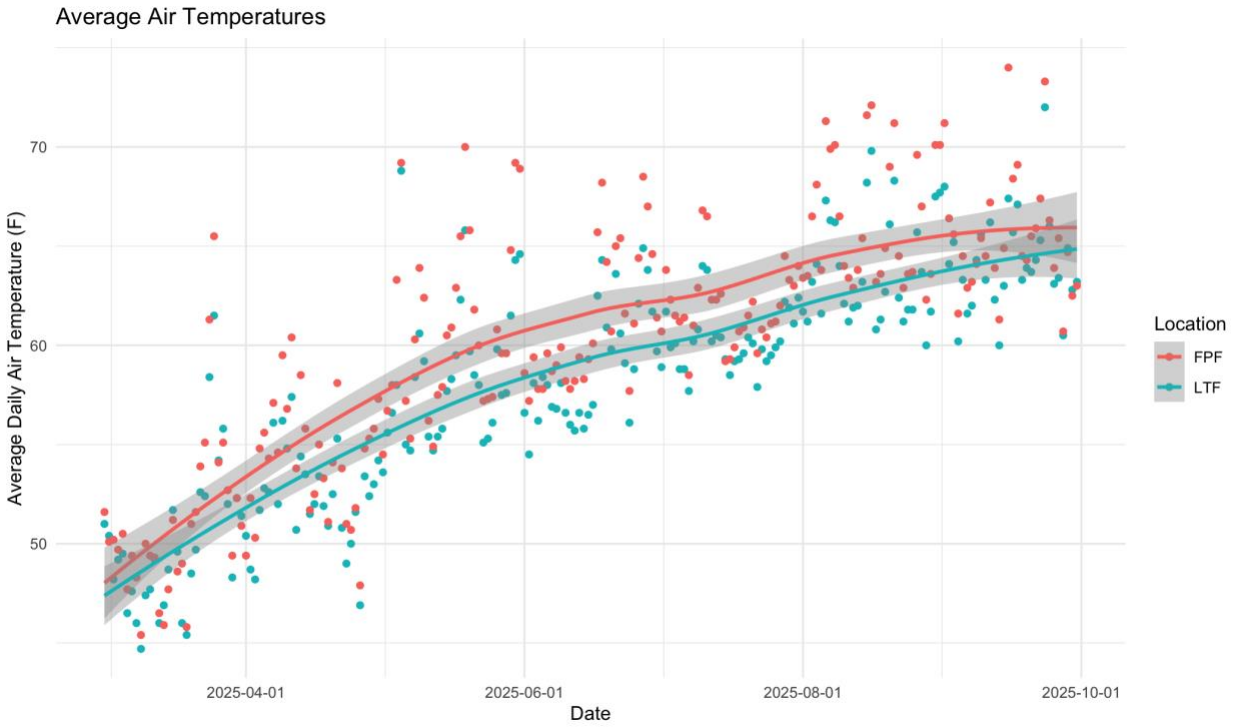


Figure 2a and b. Cucumber beetle counts in different crops over time at Front Porch Farm (top) and Longer Table Farm (bottom).



CIMIS station data was used to estimate average daily air temperatures from stations located close to each farm. While average temperatures tended to be approximately 1 to 3 degrees warmer at Front Porch Farm than Longer Table Farm, the overall air temperature trends were similar. Anecdotally, farmer Susannah at Front Porch Farm noted that the relatively mild summer in 2025 did not seem to have a strong effect on CB populations, whereas more extreme heat waves in the past seemed to encourage more extreme fluctuations in CB populations.

Questions

Farmer Susannah at FPF kindly shared these thoughtful reflections about CB monitoring and IPM based on her experiences, shared with permission. These questions are relevant for any vegetable or cut flower grower in our region to help think through management. There is no one-size-fits-all solution, but these questions and perspectives can provide good food for thought as you consider how to approach this pest challenge at your farm.

1. Is monitoring with yellow sticky traps a helpful practice for CB IPM on your farm? Why or why not?

Susannah: While we don't have an effective tool (e.g. spray) to use when we already see high levels of CBs on sticky traps - this data is helpful as we plan for where we place certain crops (e.g. not near our summer squash) and the timing etc. For us the main concentration was around our first planting of summer squash, so maybe for us strategically placing other susceptible crops away from that. Also going to try to do multiple Kaolin sprays before fruit sets to try to deter them (that seems to be our best tool at the moment).

2. Are there benefits of using trap monitoring compared with looking for CBs on plants in the field? If so, what are they? How many traps are worth using?

Susannah: We always *feel* like we are seeing a ton of CBs all over the place, and it varies depending on the time of day and which crop we get to when, and it's really hard to quantify as we are harvesting and as they are flying around. The sticky traps definitely allow us to have real numbers to compare. For us, about 3 traps down the length of a 250' bed seemed to be sufficient to get some helpful data.

3. Which IPM strategies worked best for you for CBs? Have you found that monitoring helps improve efficacy of certain strategies?

Susannah: Kaolin Clay was our best (and only) real deterrent. We tried to cover our basil with remay, which pretty quicky got torn/blown off negating our exclusion tactics. This year we are investing in some ProtekNet netting to try on the basil. However setting up low tunnels/netting is not feasible for our larger plantings.

Related Resources

Please see the following resources for more information about CB IPM.

Cucumber Beetle IPM Presentation
UC IPM Website
ATTRA Article

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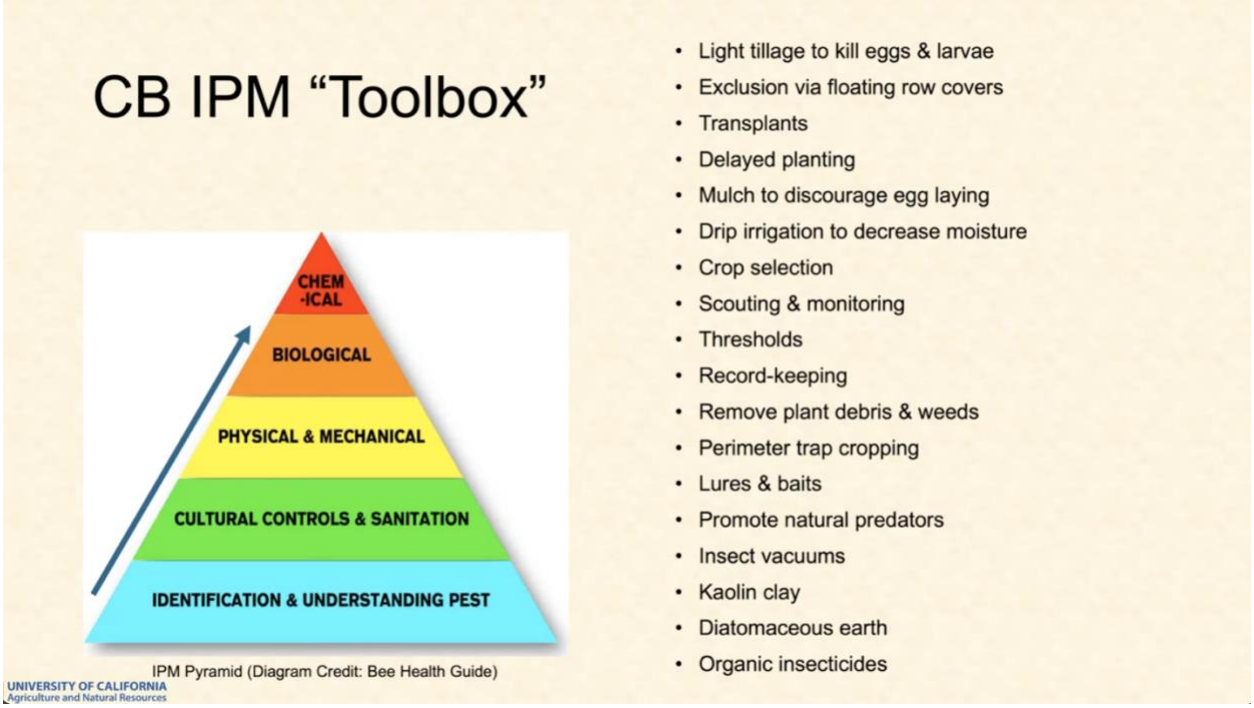

Thank you, Arbico Organics, for donating traps for this project.