Spider Mite Control

By DoMyOwn staff

Spider mites are frequent pests in landscapes and gardens and can be found feeding on many fruit bearing plants as well as ornamental plants. Spider mites are not insects, but members of the arachnid class along with spiders and ticks. These mites, also known as webspinning mites, are the most common mite pests and among the most widespread of all pests in the garden and farm.

Description

To the unaided eye, spider mites look like tiny moving specs. With the use of a 10X hand lens you will be able to properly see these tiny creatures. Adult females, larger than adult males, are less than 1/20 inch long. Adults of this species have an oval body, eight legs and two red eyespots near the head. Young or immature spider mites resemble adults, with exception of only having six legs. Eggs are globular and clear, resembling tiny drops of water. Eggs will become cream colored before hatching occurs.

Spider mites live in groups, usually on the underside of leaves; a single group or colony may contain hundreds of individual mites. The common names "spider mite" and "webspinning mite" come from the silk webbing they produce on infested leaves. Spider mites are the only species of mites able to produce webbing.

Life Cycle

Spider mites overwinter as adults, keeping themselves hidden from cold temperatures. When spring arrives and the temperatures start to rise, mites will leave their hiding places to feed and mate. Females will lay several dozen eggs over a two week period. These hatchlings will pass through the larvae stage and two nymph stages before becoming adults. Spider mite populations will quickly grow when weather conditions are favorable - hot with low humidity. Areas with water stressed trees or hot, dry sites will most often exhibit mite damage.

Damage

Spider mites feed by puncturing plants with their piercing sucking mouthparts and removing chlorophyll along with other plant juices. This type of feeding will cause plants to have a white or yellow speckled appearance. As feeding continues more damage will occur eventually causing leaves turn yellow and drop off. Infested leaves, fruits and twigs are usually covered in webbing.

Spider Mite control

Spider mites can be very difficult to control. If the wrong product is used (or the right product misused), the population may become distressed and reproduce at higher rates than normal causing a population explosion.

Talstar provides optimal spider mite control when applied during spring to mid-summer. Higher application rates and/or more frequent treatments may be required for acceptable spider mite control during mid- to late-summer. The addition of a surfactant or horticultural oil may increase the effectiveness of Talstar. Talstar applications may be rotated with those of other products that have different modes of action in control programs that are designed to manage resistance by spider mites. Consult your local Cooperative Extension Service for resistance management recommendations in your region.

Additional products labeled for spider mite control include Demand CS, Mavrik Aquaflow, Onslaught, Surrender Pestabs, and Suspend.