How to Identify Scale Insects

By DoMyOwn staff

OVERVIEW

Scale Insects in the United States



Scale insects are generally small, spread easily from one plant to the next, and can be a difficult-to-eliminate pest that causes unwanted plant injury if left untreated. Their common name comes from the fact that scales live their adult life under a protective layer that may resemble a fish scale or the skin of a reptile. In this guide you will find some ways to identify common types of scale along with our recommended ways to eliminate them and keep your property safe from future infestations.

SIZE



Scale insects are very small--sometimes only 1/16 of an inch wide, but also up to 3/8 of an inch across. Most armored scales measure 1/32-1/16 of an inch, while soft scales are typically from 1/16-1/4 of an inch long.

SHAPE

Female scale insects--the ones you see sticking to your plants--are generally oval or circular in shape. Some varieties of adult female scale have no means of locomotion and will remain in their selected spot for life. The males of these species are rarely seen and resemble tiny gnats with some mobility.

COLOR



Scale insects vary with age and species, but many are brown or black in color. Some specific varieties have a cottony white exterior.

RANGE

Around 1000 varieties of scale can be found throughout the United States. They are most often found on the trunks or twigs of plants, or clinging to the underside of leaves.