Scale Insect Inspection Guide

By DoMyOwn staff

OVERVIEW



Inspecting for Scale Insects can be tricky--they're small, sometimes hard to see on a plant, and may not immediately cause visible plant damage that can be spotted easily. This guide will help you learn where some of the most common types of scale insects like to live and feed. Find more details about what scale insects look like on our identification guide.

Where to Look for Scale Pests

Scale insects attach themselves to the most hospitable spot they can find on their preferred host plant and many never move again. Female scale insects will often settle on the underside of twigs or branches of trees for their entire adult life. These locations offer some protection from predators and the elements. Scale nymphs of some varieties will move to feed on leaves during summer months, but return to twigs or branches before leaves begin to fall.

GROUP 1 Soft Scale Insects

Signs of Soft Scale Insects



You may be able to determine which type of scale is present on your property by looking for the excretion of sugary honeydew and the resulting black sooty mold that usually forms around it. Soft scale insects produce this honeydew from their sucking style of feeding on twigs or branches of a plant. If you see these signs of possible soft scale infestation, a visual check on the underside of leaves and branches should confirm your theory easily.

Common Soft Scale Feeding Spots

- Cottony Maple Leaf Scale - on leaves or branches of maple or dogwood trees
- Wax Scale - on stems of holly, cherry laurel, boxwood, and other plants
- Tulip Tree Scale - on branches of tulip trees and magnolias
- Lecanium Scale - on branches and leaves of several types of oak tree, elms, maples, and others
- Crepe Myrtle Bark Scale - on branches and twigs of crepe myrtle plants -- these unusual scale insects have a bark- or felt-like scale covering, but behave like other soft scale in most ways

GROUP 2 Armored Scale Insects

Signs of Armored Scale Insects



Armored scale insects extract plant fluids in a less obvious manner than their soft cousins. Their hard protective shells often blend in easily with the bark of a tree, and they may be harder to spot. Plants infested with armored scale may display leaf droop or dying branches. These infestations are most common on plants already under stress by drought, damage, or weak roots.

Common Armored Scale Feeding Spots

- Tea Scale - underneath the leaves of camellia and holly plants
- Gloomy Scale - on the trunk or branches of red maple trees
- Euonymus Scale - on leaves and stems of Euonymus, holly, and camellia plants
- Obscure Scale - on the trunk and branches of hickory and oak trees
- Juniper Scale - on leaves and stems of juniper and cypress plants

Do you have scale pests around your home or garden? Learn the treatment options available to you in our how to get rid of scale insects guide. Click the right arrow below to learn more!