Whitefly Identification Guide

What Are Whiteflies?

By DoMyOwn staff

OVERVIEW



Whiteflies are very small, winged, sap-sucking insects. These soft-bodied pests are similar to anaphid or a mealybug and are sometimes mistaken for an immature moth. Despite their name, whiteflies are not really flies. The whitefly's color and name come from the white, waxy substance that the bug's body naturally produces and uses to coat its body and wings.

They are very small--as tiny as 1/12 of an inch. These sucking pests are often found hanging out on the underside of leaves. Shake a few leaves on a plant where you think you've seen these pests and they are likely to scatter, giving you a better view of the tiny invaders.

SIZE



The average size of an adult whitefly compared with a US dime

Whiteflies are quite small, ranging from 1/12 to 1/8 of an inch long. They grow from even more minute eggs that are sometimes laid in circular or spiral patterns. The eggs of some whitefly types will be covered with their own wax for protection. The whitefly will progress through four growth stages before becoming an adult and reaching full size.

SHAPE



Whiteflies have a triangular look from above, and their white wings make them easier to spot against greenery.

COLOR



White fly adults are white in color thanks to their self-applied white waxy coating. Some whiteflies display a darkened area on their forewings that appears as a pair of gray spots.

RANGE

Whiteflies have been found on both coasts of the United States, and in many states in between.

Have you found whiteflies on your property? Read part 2 of our 4-part whitefly guide to find out where whiteflies may be hiding in your garden. Click the right arrow below to read more.