

ABOUT APHIDS



APHIDS are very small (under 1/4") soft-bodied, pear-shaped insects with long antennae. They multiply quickly, many generations in one season.

COLOR They can be white, black, brown, yellow, gray, light green or even pink.

HABIT Usually feed in large groups. They can feed on a wide variety of plants, but some species are specialists and feed on specific plants. Nymphs and adults feed on plant juices, attacking leaves, stems, buds, flowers, fruit, and/or roots, depending on the species.

APHID ID AND DAMAGE

- Look for misshapen, curling, stunted, or yellow leaves or flowers and fruit that appear distorted or deformed. Be sure to check the undersides of leaves, as aphids love to hide there.
- If the leaves or stems are covered with a sticky substance, that is a sign that aphids may have been sipping sap. The **honeydew**, a sugary liquid produced by the insects, can attract other insects, such as ants, which gather the substance for food.
- The **honeydew** can sometimes develop a fungal growth called **sooty mold**, causing branches and leaves to appear black.
- Some aphid species cause galls to form on roots or leaves.
- Aphids may transmit viruses to certain plants, and also attract other insects that prey on them, such as ladybugs.

CONTROL AND PREVENTION

- Spray cold water on the leaves - a cool blast can dislodge them, or wipe or spray the leaves of the plant with a mild solution of water and a few drops of dishwashing detergent, and add a pinch of cayenne. It should be reapplied every 2-3 days for 2 wks.
- Use **organic controls** such as horticultural oil and pyrethrum spray.
- Dust plants with flour for an aphid invasion. It constipates the pests.
- Use commercially available biological aphid controls or spray with insecticidal soap, horticultural oil (NEEM) or homemade garlic spray.
- Purchase beneficial insects such as: lady bugs, lacewings, and parasitic wasps, which will feed on aphids to keep aphid populations in check. The tiny black wasp *Aphidius matricariae* attacks more than 40 different species of aphid.
- **Companion planting** can help to keep aphids away from your plants in the first place. For example: garlic and chives repel aphids when planted near lettuce, peas, or rose bushes, aphids are repelled by catnip and are especially attracted to mustard and nasturtium. You can plant these near more valuable plants as traps for the aphids. Nasturtiums spoil the taste of fruit tree sap for aphids and will help keep aphids off broccoli.
- Keep your plants as healthy as possible. Some say they never get aphids because they regularly use Seaweed Extract to keep plants vigorous.



USING ALCOHOL TO CONTROL APHIDS

Isopropanol alcohol (*rubbing alcohol*) works fine but be sure it doesn't have additives. Ethanol alcohol (*grain alcohol*) seems to work best. Alcohol is usually sold 70% strength. To make an insecticidal spray, mix equal parts alcohol and water (if using 95% alcohol, mix 1 part alcohol to 1½ water).

You can also add alcohol to a soapy emulsion to make it more effective. In a spray bottle, combine 5 c. water, 2 c. alcohol, and 1 Tbsp. liquid soap. **NOTE:** When applying an alcohol or soap spray, always test a small area first, applying morning or evening when the sun is not strong. Watch for 2 days for adverse reactions before applying more.