

SPIDER MITES

Overview

Spider mites are a common pest on many different species of trees and shrubs. They cause damage to plants by sucking the cell contents out of the leaves, leaving a stippling patterns of irregular yellow spots on the leaves. It is also common to see fine webbing in between needles and along the petioles of leaves.

Spider mites fall within two general categories, cool season mites which are generally active in early spring and fall, and warm season mites which are generally active during the summer months. Identifying what season the spider mites affecting the target plant are active is key to managing these pests.



Diagnosis

- Common Cool Season Mites: spruce spider mite, southern red spider mite
- Common Warm Season Mites: two-spotted spider mite, European red spider mite, honeylocust, maple, and oak spider mites
- Symptoms include yellowing foliage and stippling damage that can be seen throughout the growing season
- Leaf drop and a grayish, unhealthy appearance of the foliage throughout growing season is common

What To Do

Spider mites are a pest that, left unmanaged, can multiply quickly and cause significant damage to the foliage of trees and shrubs. While spider mites are often not fatal to plants on their own, the damage they cause to the foliage weakens the plants making them susceptible to attack from other insects and diseases. In conifer species, the damage to needles and foliage is permanent and considered a serious health threat.

Treatment of spider mites can be applied in a few different ways, the best option being determined by the type of host tree, the species of mites, the time of year, and the location of the tree. You can determine if mites are active by slapping foliage against a white sheet of paper to observe tiny active mites.



Stippling damage on maple



Tapping a branch over a white piece of paper can reveal the presence of mites

QUICK FACTS

- There are over 1,200 species of spider mites worldwide and know to feed on hundreds of tree and shrub species.
- Spider mites are generalized into 2 groups: cool-season and warm-season mites depending on their active feeding season.
- Left unmanaged, spider mites rapidly multiply and can cause significant damage to leaves and needles.

MANAGING SPIDER MITES

Early identification of spider mites can prevent major damage to individual plants and prevent the spread to nearby trees and shrubs. Depending on the time of year and the species of mite, there are several different management options available.



Spider mite feeding on conifers can cause significant, permanent damage to the foliage.

Managing the Pests

There are many different miticide treatments your arborist may recommend based on the timing and severity of the current infection. Not every treatment is effective on every life stage of the mites.

Control is most effective when populations are identified early. Multiple applications of miticides may be necessary. Lucid controls adults and nymphs. Forbid and Floramite controls all stages of mite development and are ideally applied before severe damage is done to the plant. Lepitect will control adults and nymphs, and will provide 30 days residual control.

Other Treatment Practices

- For smaller plants a directed stream of water may dislodge active mites.
- Install mulch ring around the base of the tree
- Provide low level nitrogen fertilization



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