

SPIDER MITES

What Do They Look Like?

- Tiny, eight-legged, 0.3 to 0.5 mm (1/50 inch) long with fine hairs on body
- May be red, yellow or pale green in colour
- Most spider mites spin delicate webs

Where Do I Find Them?

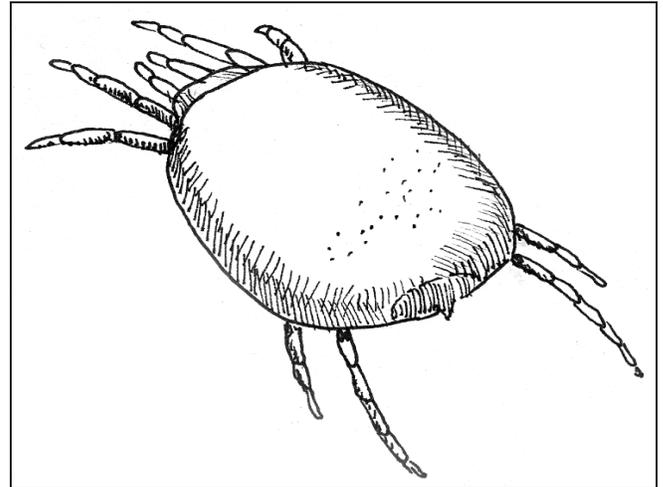
- Look for spider mites on the undersides of the leaves of a variety of fruit and nut trees, vegetable and berry crops, and ornamental plants

Spider Mite Life Cycle

- Spider mites are active in both winter and summer, but reproduce quickly during hot, dry weather
- A single generation may take only seven days to go through its life cycle
- Adult females lay eggs on host plants, which hatch into larvae
- Spider mites feed on plants as larvae, through two nymph or immature stages, and as adults
- Adult females are larger than males and have rounded abdomens
- Eggs are laid in the fall and will remain dormant during winter
- Spider mites survive the winter by hiding in garden waste and in the cracks of tree trunks

What Does the Damage Look Like?

- Adults, nymphs and larvae feed on the juices of plants; they do not chew leaves
- Plant leaves turn yellow and speckled. With severe infestations, the edges of yellowed leaves become brown and brittle. Some plants may become deformed. In rare cases, plants may die



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Are Spider Mites Really A Problem?

- Most spider mite infestations cause only minimal or superficial damage to plants and trees
- Early detection of spider mites is important:
 - Check for spider mites by taking a piece of white paper or cardboard and striking some plant leaves against it
 - Test this out on several different plants in your yard
 - The mites can be seen walking slowly on the paper

What Can I Do? Non-Pesticide Treatments

- Spider mites will die off naturally in very hot weather or when their natural enemies (ladybugs, certain kinds of flies) appear
- Spider mites usually do not cause long-term damage to plants or trees

- Spray spider mites off the undersides of leaves with a strong stream of water from a spray bottle or garden hose, during spring and summer. You will have to repeat this as the mites do not die from the spraying
- To avoid fungus on plants, spray water in the early morning so the leaves dry out during the day
- Spray mites off plants with soapy water if the infestation is persistent in spring/summer
- Hand-pick infested weeds and dispose in household garbage
- Prune infested branches or leaves and dispose in household garbage

Tips For A Healthy Garden

- **Ensure soil is healthy, well conditioned with organic compost and has adequate drainage (remember that plants get most of their nutrients from the soil)**
 - **Plan your garden so plants are put in areas where they naturally thrive (dry or wet, sun or shade)**
 - **Plant in raised beds (good for the plants, good for the back!)**
 - **Use native plants that are already acclimatized, require low maintenance and have an in-bred resistance to local pests and diseases**
 - **Water deeply but infrequently to maintain a strong root structure**
 - **Protect and attract native beneficial species (give them a place to live and a source of water and they'll do the rest)**
 - **Practise annual crop rotation for each type of vegetable (keeps patterns of disease or insect invasion in check)**
 - **Fertilize regularly in spring and fall with organic compost**
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How Can I Prevent It Next Year?

- Follow the healthy garden tips below to make sure your plants are robust and can fight off aphids
- Check plants for spider mites before you buy them! New plants should be quarantined from other plants until you can be sure they are free of mites

For More Information

CRD Roundtable
www.crd.bc.ca/rte/pest

CRD Hotline
 (250) 360-3030 or 1-800-663-4425 local 3030
hotline@crd.bc.ca

This is one in a series of Infosheets on common lawn and garden pests in the Capital Regional District.