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Problem: Aphids

Hosts: Aphids attack such a wide variety of plant material that it is not practical to list individual species.

Description: Aphids are small (about 1/8 of an inch long), soft-bodied, pear-shaped insects of many colors such as green, black, gray, yellow or red. Some are winged during certain times of the year. Generally, aphids can be recognized by their cornicles, a pair of tube-like structures projecting from the rear of their bodies.

Aphids feed by sucking sap from buds, leaves, twigs and developing fruit. Leaves may be stunted and distorted and fruit may become misshapen. Aphids can also carry a number of plant viruses.

Many aphid species excrete a sticky substance known as "honeydew" which usually becomes black with sooty mold. Automobiles parked under trees with large aphid populations will often be subjected to a "rain" of honeydew.

Though aphids undergo simple metamorphosis, the life cycle is often complex. In most species, winter is passed as eggs. Nymphs hatch out in April with several generations occurring through the growing season. It is common for females to give birth without fertilization (parthenogenesis) and for live young to be produced (viviparity). Different generations may be winged or unwinged with the winged generation being the migratory stage.

Recommendations: Aphids are usually controlled effectively by nature. Adverse weather conditions such as beating rains and low temperatures, as well as fungus diseases, insect predators and parasites keep the aphids in check. Aphid enemies

include lady beetles, syrphid fly larvae, aphis lions and small wasp parasites known as braconids.

Insecticide applications destroy beneficial insects as well as pests and leave trees or shrubs unprotected if pest resurgence occurs. Since beneficial insects play an important role in natural aphid control, try washing aphids away with a forceful stream of water before using insecticide sprays.

If control measures are warranted, use horticultural oil, insecticidal soap, malathion, cyfluthrin (Baythroid, BioAdvanced Tomato and Vegetable Insect Killer) or permethrin (Eight Vegetable, Fruit & Flower Concentrate; Hi-Yield Garden and Farm Insect Control) Reapplication may be needed.

References:

1. Aphids, Entfact-103, University of Kentucky, College of Agriculture
2. Life Histories of Common Insects, Mites and Nematodes Infesting Ornamental Plants in Missouri, Missouri Department of Agriculture, pg C-1 through C-12

Last Update: 10/4/2023

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