

Problem: Sooty Mold



Hosts: Just about any plant material.

Description: Sooty mold is often a byproduct of the honeydew that some insects produce. Honeydew is a shiny, sticky substance that comes from plant sap that has passed through the body of an insect. Though aphids are the usual culprits, other members of the insect order Homoptera also can produce honeydew, including planthoppers, soft scales, mealybugs, whiteflies, psyllids, and some leafhoppers. All these insects have sucking mouthparts and usually have little impact on the health of the landscape plants they feed on. The honeydew they produce is often considered a nuisance because of its sticky nature and can coat anything underneath the plant including cars, sidewalks or even the leaves of plants. The high sugar content of the honeydew encourages the growth of a fungus on plant leaves called sooty mold. Sooty mold turns anything on which it grows a black color, making it much more objectionable to people.

Recommendations: Sooty mold is usually not severe enough to warrant control. Also, insects that produce sooty mold (other than soft scales) are often controlled naturally due to adverse environmental conditions, predators, parasites, and fungal diseases. If control is necessary, a heavy spray of water will help remove insects and honeydew from small plants. A wide range of insecticides, such as acephate (Orthene), horticultural oils, and malathion are labeled and can be used on larger plants, if necessary.

References:

1. [Sooty Mold](#), The Center for Agriculture, Food and The Environment, Umass Extension

2. [Sooty Mold](#), Cooperative Extension, Chemung County, Cornell University

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