**Sucking Insects in the Landscape**

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Lace bugs, aphids and spider mites have been reported to be active on several landscape and garden plants.

Lace bugs are small sucking insects that are actively feeding on the ‘New Gold’ lantana and persimmons this summer. On the lantana, the symptom is dusty-looking foliage and the plants stop blooming.

Persimmons are a tough native plant that has been used to good effect in low water use landscapes. The lace bug feeding causes the leaves to be deformed and small. On the infected plants, sooty mold is often also present. The sooty mold grows on the honeydew excreted by the feeding lace bugs.

The damage that we see now will only be corrected by time. In six to eight weeks the ‘New Gold’ lantana will begin blooming again. The persimmons may drop the severely affected leaves and put on some new foliage this fall just before it drops its leaves for the winter. If your lantana, persimmons or other affected plants are attacked every year, make a note on the calendar for next year on June 1 to treat them with a preventative treatment. Spray with a systemic such as acephate every two weeks through July 31. Bayer has a systemic insecticide product that can be sprayed but also can be applied as a drench to be taken up by the roots. Follow the label instructions for control.

Lace bugs are unpredictable; they will occur on some specific plants every year and may only occur irregularly on other plants. Other than the negative effects the pests have on bloom and foliage appearance, lace bugs do not seem to permanently damage the infected plants. For those plants that only rarely host the pests, no treatment may be necessary.

Crepe myrtles will often show the same symptoms as we just described for lace bugs on lantana and persimmons. The damage in the case of crepe myrtles is caused by the feeding of aphids.

Aphids are easier to detect and control than lace bugs, but if they are undetected before the sooty mold appears, the impact is the same. Blooming stops and leaves have a stubborn coating of sooty mold.

The systemic insecticide and timing of application described for the lace bugs also work for aphids, but the organic control spinosad or even Safer soap may work just as well as the systemics if they are applied before the feeding produces sooty mold. Again mark your calendar for next year if the problem seems to occur every year.

Spider mites love the hot dry weather we are experiencing. One of their favorite plants to infest is tomato. The difficulty in protecting tomatoes from spider mites in midsummer is one of the reasons we recommend that you pull the spring planted tomatoes and plant a second crop for the autumn.

Recognize the presence of spider mites by the dusty discolored look of infected foliage. In extreme infestations, the plants could be covered with webs. Treatment at this stage and time of year is rarely effective. The recommended action is to pull and discard the infected plants in favor of new transplants. Protect the new plants with preventative spray of seaweed extract and/or neem oil. Be especially conscious of spraying under the leaves.

**Garden Tasks**

If tomatoes, marigold or other plants become infected with spider mites at this time of the year, treatment is not effective. Pull and discard the plants in the garbage.

Wasps commonly build their nests under house eaves and other locations near human activity. They are generally beneficial so only spray the nests that are a threat to your activities.

Sand burs are mature now and a threat to pets and your ankles. To reduce the populations, drag a carpet remnant over the area. Put the remnant in the garbage when it is full of burs.

There are still 3 and ½ months of bloom period left for vinca, zinnias, cosmos and moss roses. Keep them weeded and watered.