



## Aphids in the home garden



Aphids are a very common garden pest. They attack a wide range of plants by piercing soft tissue and sucking sap. There are actually many different species of aphids and they can be found in a variety of forms and colours. The main damage caused by aphids are stunting of plant growth, distortion of new growth and the transmission of various diseases. Aphids also transmit virus diseases such as broad bean wilt and potato mosaic virus. Their honeydew (excreta) is very attractive to ants, which will often 'farm' aphids - guarding them, moving them around from plant to plant and even taking them into their colonies.

As aphids are small and are often on the under-surface of leaves they may not be noticed until they become an infestation. Sticky leaf surfaces and flecks of white on the leaf surface (moulted aphid skins) are also signs that aphids are about.

Aphids will multiply rapidly under ideal conditions, with many overlapping generations during warmer months. They can lay eggs or have live young. In fact, their reproductive ability is quite something. They reproduce in the 'normal' way, that is, sexual reproduction, but they can also reproduce by parthenogenesis. This means that in the height of the growing season males are not required for reproduction.



## Control

Pyrethrum sprays may control them but it must be reapplied frequently. As pyrethrum sprays also effect pollinating insects use cautiously or late in the evening when bees have returned to their hive.

Some safe options for control

1. young aphids are easily hosed off with a garden hose (assuming of course that you do have an independent water supply)
  2. wait for natural predators such as some wasps, ladybirds and lacewings. They may not clean up the pests straight away but they will eventually.
- Third is to make up a spray that uses garlic and oil as the base.



Take

- 50g chopped garlic bulbs
- 1 teaspoon vegetable oil
- 1 teaspoon liquid detergent
- 250ml water

It is best to make up this mixture at least 24 hours before use to let the ingredients thoroughly infuse and of course make sure it is kept out of reach of children. Before it is used make sure that you strain the mixture carefully, or you will end up with a clogged up sprayer. Use 5ml of this mixture in 1 litre of water and spray directly onto the pest.

