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Scale - Fact Sheet



Scale are a very common garden pest. They attack a wide range of plants by piercing soft tissue and sucking sap. They produce various types of scale coverings which provide protection from insects. The scale covering may be hard and dark, soft, waxy or soft and cushiony. There are actually many different species of scale and they can be found in a variety of forms and colours. The main damage caused by scale is stunting of plant growth, distortion of new growth and the transmission of various diseases.

Scale insects secrete a sticky substance known as honeydew. 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. The honeydew also provides a food source for black sooty mould that can cover badly infected plants. The whole plant can become caked in the black mould further reducing growth rates and increasing the visual damage in a garden.



Black sooty mould caused by scale insects.

Scale will multiply rapidly under ideal conditions, with many overlapping generations during warmer months.

Control

Application of oil based sprays such as Eco Oil or pest oil are recommended as a safe alternative to more toxic systemic sprays. For the oil sprays to be effective complete coverage is needed as the oil operates by “suffocating” the scale insect. Usually 2 or more applications of the oil will be needed about 10 days apart. Avoid spraying in very hot bright sunny weather with oil based sprays as they can burn.

For more severe infestation the application of a systemic insecticide such as Confidor may be used if no bees are present and flowering is not anticipated. Confidor should always be used carefully and in accordance with the label.



Homemade garlic spray recipe

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.

