



Spider mites Fact Sheet

Spider mites are a problem on many garden plants—both in pots and those plants growing in the ground. These little creature are actually arachnids, or related to spiders, as they have 8 legs. They are extremely difficult to see with the naked eye as they are very small and more often than not more or less translucent. The picture on the right shows what they look like under high magnification.



The damage they cause is a sucking damage that in severe cases can really reduce both the vigour and appearance of garden plants. The usual first signs that you have mites is a mottled appearance on the upper side of the leaf. (see image below left) with the mites sheltering on the underside of the leaf. If you look really carefully at the image on the lower right you can see some webbing on the underside of a leaf just near the main vein of a Magnolia leaf. This is a good indication that the problem is spider mites.



Control

There are a range of pesticides available for the control of mites, including "soft" options such as pest oil. These sprays need to completely cover all pests as they work by suffocating the pests, and have very little residual activity. Confidor is also registered for use although caution is advised if plants are flowering. Yates Naturesoap is also a good safe alternative to control mites. Be sure to use the correct spray, as some pesticides actually cause mite numbers to flare up due to elimination of natural enemies!

Natural control options

Predators offer a better alternative and may have a longer lasting effect than insecticides. The 2 main predators of mites are a mite eating mite called Persimilis and Lacewings. They have been commercially used to control two-spotted mites in a wide range of crops for more than 25 years in Australia. The advantage of using these predators is they do the work of finding and killing the mites for you.

Use water!

Mites thrive when the conditions are dry and hot. Water the undersides of leaves each morning and change the environment and very often mite numbers will drop to a level that natural predators will again get your garden back into balance with no need for any further control.....



Persimilis (L) and Two-Spotted Mite (R)

For suppliers of predatory mites and other safe alternatives visit these websites
<http://www.bugsforbugs.com.au/>
<http://www.greenharvest.com.au/>