

Control Red Spider Mites

Treat Them With Scheduled Spraying



What To Look For

Red spider mites, also called spinning mites or red spiders, may be green, brown, yellow, red or almost black. They are nearly round in outline, barely visible to the naked eye, and have eight legs when fully matured. In Nebraska, red spider mites may attack many plants. They are especially damaging to spruce trees, junipers, arborvitae, burning bush, most perennial flowers and vegetables such as green beans, eggplant, peppers, tomatoes and cucumbers. Patio plants such as hibiscus are very vulnerable to mite infestation.

Spider mites have tiny mouth parts modified for piercing individual plant cells and removing the contents. This results in tiny yellow or white speckles. When many of these feeding spots occur near each other, the foliage takes on a yellow or bronzed cast. Once the foliage of a plant becomes bronzed, it often drops prematurely. Heavily infested plants may be discolored, or even killed. Web producing spider mites may coat the foliage with a fine dry silk which collects dust and looks dirty.

Most varieties of spider mites overwinter in the egg stage, however some species over-winter as adult females. Activity begins in the early spring. After the egg hatch, mites pass through several stages of growth. Warm, dry weather favors mite reproduction, so damaging infections usually develop during the summer. Plants near buildings, especially southern exposures, may have damaging infestation in the spring. In greenhouses and on house plants, mites may live and reproduce year round. Several generations are produced each year and infestations may develop rapidly during hot weather.

Effective Control

Frequent high-pressure syringing with cold water from a garden hose helps to reduce red spider mite infestations

on evergreens. Syringing is not as effective on deciduous plants and vegetables because the water must be directed to the under-sides of leaves.

Several commercial sprays are available. If used properly, they are effective. Most sprays kill mites on contact so they must be applied to the undersides of the leaves. Repeat sprays usually should be done within a week of the initial application or when injury is evident.

Products that control mites on contact include:

- Malathion
- Spinosad
- Permethrin (Eight)
- Neem oil (Triple Action Plus)

- Acephate (Bonide Systemic Insecticide)

A systemic liquid spray that penetrates leaf tissue. Read directions carefully to be sure it is safe for the particular plant. Do not use on edible plants.



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