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SP290-E Insects: Azalea Lace Bug

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Insects



Azalea Lace Bug

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Originally developed by Harry Williams, Professor Emeritus
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Since its introduction from Japan in the early 1900s, the azalea lace bug has become a destructive pest of azaleas. Although this bug prefers evergreen azalea varieties, it will infest deciduous varieties. Mountain laurel can also become infested.

The smooth, white egg of the lace bug, which measures approximately 0.4 mm by 0.8 mm, is flask-shaped, with the neck to one side. It is usually deposited in the underside tissue of a young leaf along the mid-rib or large vein. Each egg is inserted in the tissue with its neck slightly above the leaf surface.

Female lace bugs lay groups of eggs on the underside of the leaves in September and October. These eggs overwinter and hatch during March and April. The populations build from spring through autumn, with about four generations possible. A large population of lace bugs can be established during July, August and September. It is quite possible to find all stages of the lace bug together under a leaf during this time.

The adult lace bug is 1/8 inch long and 1/16 inch wide. It has lacy wings with brown and black markings and light brown legs and antennae. The young nymph lace bug is nearly colorless at hatching but soon turns black and spiny. It sheds its outer skin six times and ranges in size from 0.4 mm to 1.8 mm before becoming an adult.

Injury to the plants is caused by nymphs and adults as they extract sap from the under surfaces of the leaves. The damage appears as spotted discoloration or bleaching of the upper surfaces of the leaves. In severe infestations, the leaves become almost white, many of them drying completely and dropping off. The undersides of the leaves are also disfigured by the black, dry, shiny excrement and cast skins of the insects.



Adult azalea lace bug

Control Measures

Repeated applications of an insecticide are usually needed to effectively control lace bugs. The first application should be made as soon as nymphs appear in the spring, followed by a second application seven to 10 days later. Applications should be repeated at monthly intervals as needed.

Thorough coverage of the undersides of the leaves where the insects are found is essential if good control is to be expected. Select one of the insecticides listed for azalea lacebug control or ornamental plants at <http://eppserver.ag.utk.edu/redbook/pdf/ornamentalinsects.pdf> and follow label directions. When deciding which insecticide to use, make sure that the insecticide label lists the site (landscape, commercial nursery, etc.) where you want to make an application.

Precautionary Statement

To protect people and the environment, pesticides should be used safely. This is everyone's responsibility, especially the user. Read and follow label directions carefully before you buy, mix, apply, store, or dispose of a pesticide. According to laws regulating pesticides, they must be used only as directed by the label. Persons who do not obey the law will be subject to penalties.

Disclaimer Statement

Pesticides recommended in this publication were registered for the prescribed uses when printed. Pesticides registrations are continuously reviewed. Should registration of a recommended pesticide be canceled, it would no longer be recommended by the University of Tennessee. Use of trade or brand names in this publication is for clarity and information; it does not imply approval of the product to the exclusion of others which may be of similar, suitable composition, nor does it guarantee or warrant the standard of the product.

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