

# Healthy Choices to Control Lawn and Garden Pests

## SPIDER MITES

### What Do They Look Like?

- Tiny, eight-legged, 0.3 to 0.5 mm (1/50 inch) long with fine hairs on body
- May be red, yellow or pale green in colour
- Most spider mites spin delicate webs

### Where Do I Find Them?

- Look for spider mites on the undersides of the leaves of a variety of fruit and nut trees, vegetable and berry crops, and ornamental plants

### Spider Mite Life Cycle

- Spider mites are active in both winter and summer, but reproduce quickly during hot, dry weather
- A single generation may take only seven days to go through its life cycle
- Adult females lay eggs on host plants, which hatch into larvae
- Spider mites feed on plants as larvae, through two nymph or immature stages, and as adults
- Adult females are larger than males and have rounded abdomens
- Eggs are laid in the fall and will remain dormant during winter
- Spider mites survive the winter by hiding in garden waste and in the cracks of tree trunks

### What Does The Damage Look Like?

- Adults, nymphs and larvae feed on the juices of plants; they do not chew leaves



- Plant leaves turn yellow and speckled. With severe infestations, the edges of yellowed leaves become brown and brittle. Some plants may become deformed. In rare cases, plants may die

### Are Spider Mites Really A Problem?

- Most spider mite infestations cause only minimal or superficial damage to plants and trees
- Early detection of spider mites is important:
- Check for spider mites by taking a piece of white paper or cardboard and striking some plant leaves against it
- Test this out on several different plants in your yard
- The mites can be seen walking slowly on the paper

### What Can I Do? Non-Pesticide Treatments

- Spider mites will die off naturally in very hot weather or when their natural enemies (ladybugs, certain kinds of flies) appear
- Spider mites usually do not cause long-term damage to plants or trees

- Spray spider mites off the undersides of leaves with a strong stream of water from a spray bottle or garden hose, during spring and summer. You will have to repeat this as the mites do not die from the spraying
- To avoid fungus on plants, spray water in the early morning so the leaves dry out during the day
- Spray mites off plants with soapy water if the infestation is persistent in spring/summer
- Hand-pick infested weeds and dispose in household garbage
- Prune infested branches or leaves and dispose in household garbage

### **How Can I Prevent It Next Year?**

- Follow the healthy garden tips below to make sure your plants are robust and can fight off aphids
- Check plants for spider mites before you buy them! New plants should be quarantined from other plants until you can be sure they are free of mites

### **Tips For A Healthy Garden**

- Ensure soil is healthy well-conditioned with organic compost and has adequate drainage (remember that plants get most of their nutrients from the soil)
- Plan your garden so plants are put in areas where they naturally thrive (dry or wet sun or shade)
- Plant in raised beds (good for the plants good for the back!)
- Use native plants that are already acclimatized require low maintenance and have an in-bred resistance to local pests and diseases
- Water deeply but infrequently to maintain a strong root structure
- Protect and attract native beneficial species (give them a place to live and a source of water and they'll do the rest)
- Practise annual crop rotation for each type of vegetable (keeps patterns of disease or insect invasion in check)
- Fertilize regularly in spring and fall with organic compost

