

Healthy Choices to Control Lawn and Garden Pests

APHIDS

What Do They Look Like?

- Aphids are tiny, soft-bodied, pear-shaped insects, 2-3 mm long
- They are slow moving and come in many different colours — typically green, also grey or black
- If you look closely, you may see two small tubes sticking out from their backs. These tubes are unique to aphids

Where Do I Find Them?

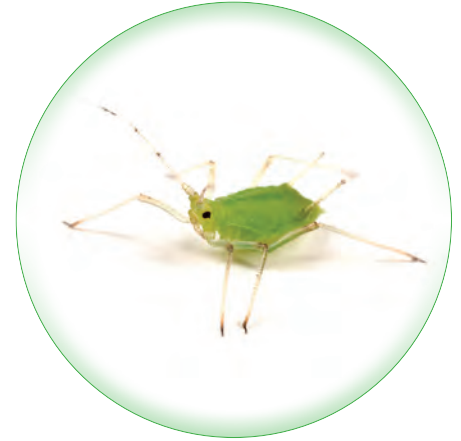
- Look for aphids on the underside of leaves of a variety of vegetable crops, ornamental plants, and trees, including fruit trees
- Aphids like to cluster together, so look for colonies
- Nasturtiums, birch trees and some roses are favourites of aphids

Aphid Life Cycle

- Aphids grow and multiply quickly when they have the right conditions
- They are generally most active in spring and summer, and tend to die off in hot weather
- Eggs remain dormant over winter and hatch in spring and summer and the cycle begins again
- One aphid can produce an entire colony!

What Does The Damage Look Like?

- Aphids use their needle-like mouth parts to suck the juices out of plants; they do not chew leaves
- When many aphids feed on the same plant, the leaves of the plant will often curl up, and fruits and flowers may look stunted or deformed
- Aphids produce honeydew, a sticky, sugary substance that is left behind on leaves



- Honeydew attracts mold that turns black and sooty but does not usually damage the plant

Are Aphids Really A Problem?

- Most aphid infestations cause only minimal or superficial damage to plants and trees (deformed leaves, buds, flowers or fruit, and blackened or sooty honeydew deposits)
- Unless aphid-infested plants or trees are seriously weakened, it is not necessary to control aphids
- Aphids will die off naturally in very hot weather or when natural enemies (ladybugs, aphid midges, certain kinds of flies) appear
- Aphids rarely cause long-term damage to plants or trees

What Can I Do? Non-Pesticide Treatments

If aphid infestations are weakening plants or trees:

- Spray aphids off the undersides of leaves with a strong stream of water from a spray bottle or garden hose, during spring and summer when they are likely to be a problem. You will have to repeat this as the aphids do not die from the spraying
- To avoid the growth of fungus on plants, spray water in the morning so leaves dry out during the day

- Spray aphids off plants with soapy water including commercial products developed for this, if the infestation is persistent in spring/summer
- Plant nasturtiums as a “trap crop” near other plants or trees that aphids find attractive; pull out the nasturtiums once they are infested and dispose of in household garbage
- Hand pick infested weeds and dispose of aphid- infested plants in household garbage
- Prune infested branches or leaves and dispose of in household garbage
- Prune back plants or trees from doorways, windows, and driveways so that the honeydew does not stick to these areas

Bugs That Eat Other Bugs - Insect Predators!

- Local garden centres stock insects that are natural predators of aphids and do not harm plants in your garden. One type of “aphid eater” is the aphid midge, a tiny fly. Talk to garden centre staff or lawn care professionals before purchasing these predator bugs
- You can attract aphid midges and other predator bugs to your garden by planting yarrow, parsley, cilantro and sweet alyssum

How Can I Prevent It Next Year?

- Follow the healthy garden tips on this page to make sure your plants are robust and can fight off aphids
- Before the next growing season, prune branches of trees or plants where aphids were found previously
- Some plants are more attractive to aphids than others, especially those with green, tender leaves. If you buy these types of plants, place them away from doorways, driveways or decks so that honeydew will not be a problem
- Avoid over-fertilizing. New growth makes plants attractive to aphids; use organic fertilizers that release nutrients slowly over time

- Plant yarrow, parsley, cilantro or sweet alyssum in spring to attract aphid predators
- Check plants for aphids before you buy them! New plants should be quarantined from other plants until you can be sure they are free from aphids

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

