

# APHID CONTROL

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Aphids are small insects which thrive on just about any plant. Any gardener or farmer knows what aphids are and may consider them their number one enemy. Also known as plant lice, these small but persistent insects seem to appear out of thin air and will encompass all the new green growth of any plant they can find. This article will detail some basic biology of aphids, explain why they are a pest and then offer a wide range of control methods which can be used for local infestations.

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## APHID BIOLOGY

Aphids are a very common pest in gardens and nursery stock around homes and farms. In fact, they may be the number one pest in both sheer numbers and frequency of plants they will attack. Though there are hundreds of species of aphids, the purpose of this article is not to detail each specie but instead detail basic biology and then offer a wide range of control methods for all types of infestations. The good news about aphids is that there a plenty of treatment options available most of which will work when done at the right time and with the right frequency. The bad news is that aphids are both persistent and quick to multiply – traits which make them a formidable foe.

Aphids are a small insect which are not much smaller than a grain of rice. There are hundreds of species distributed throughout the world and though most are plant or host specific, aphids are able to adapt their nutritional needs to take advantage of that which is abundant and available. Aphids are generally green in color but can be clear, white and just about any color which may have something to do with just what it is they are eating. Aphids overwinter as eggs and in the spring will hatch winged females that immediately search out a good food supply and once they find one they will lay eggs and move on searching for more food supplies. The eggs which are laid will hatch in about a week.

Aphids have piercing, biting mouthparts and will feed off the sap of plant life. Once they start to feed, this first batch of aphids will start to produce live young. This is done parthenogenetically which means they are able to produce live young without having to mate. The live young will begin to feed upon emerging from the females and within another week this batch will start producing more live young. Each adult can produce 50 – 100 live young which means that a few adult aphids can turn into several thousand in less than a month! All the young created will be wingless until the colony grows too large for the plant to support its food demand. At that time winged live ones will start to appear whose role is to leave their home colony seeking new plants on which to feed. This sequence of events will play out over the course of the growing season and will only stop when the plant either dies or goes dormant for the winter. Plant life within growing zones which are active year round are susceptible to aphids year round; plant life which is growing for 6 months of the year can only have active aphids during this time. If the aphids food supply goes dormant for a winter season so will the aphids. Just before they do so males will mate with females and the females will lay eggs just before death. These eggs will hatch in the following spring and this cycle will begin all over again.

As the author stated above, the intention of this article is not to detail all the different species of aphids around the world. However, the more common species includes the Pea Aphid, Bean Aphid, Cotton Aphid, Melon Aphid, Cabbage Aphid, Mealy Plum Aphid, Grain Aphid, Rose Aphid, Peach Aphid, Corn Aphid, Alfalfa Aphid, Pine Aphid, Spruce Aphid, Grass Aphid, Oak Aphid and the Cactus Aphid. Though these are all specific to a certain tree or plant, it is generally accepted that most aphids will take advantage of any vulnerable food supply. In other words, Rose Aphids don't mind eating birch tree leaves or Crepe Myrtle's if that's all they find. For this reason alone aphids are a pest which must not be ignored. If a region is having a local breakout of aphids, rest assured some will find their way onto any plants they smell so don't think your plant is safe because it's "not what they eat".

## **APHID DAMAGE**

Aphids have piercing chewing mouthparts which enable them to feed off the sap or life blood of any plant. They are much like Fleas or Mosquitoes are to mammals; Aphids seek the blood of plant life and won't stop feeding regardless of how much they hurt or stunt the plant. Fleas and mosquitoes seek the blood of pets and people; aphids seek the blood of your favorite Rose bush or garden vegetable! This behavior lends itself to many problems which stem from aphid populations and these problems are all reasons why you should not tolerate them in or around your garden and landscaped plant life. Here are some of the more important outcomes which result from aphid activity.

- 1) Aphids feeding will deplete the life blood of its host. This could mean death for any young developing plant. Aphids won't control their behavior; instead they will eat till the plant dies and then move on. Though established trees and plants may be able to endure the initial sap and nutrition withdrawal from their system, it will none the less weaken them making them vulnerable to many other problems and diseases.

2) Aphids will cause leaves to curl up and die. Mal-nourished leaves won't look right when they don't receive the right amount of food and aphids feeding will steal away some of the plants vital nutrients needed by its growing foliage.

3) Damaged leaves don't look good and may look bad all season but most importantly, they may not serve the plant well. Leaves which were designed to shelter and protect the plant from the hot summers sun won't be able to do so when curled up and brown. This will put more stress on the plant making it vulnerable to other problems. Furthermore, some leaves will look bad all season long which takes away from the aesthetic value a healthy, well manicured landscape provides.

4) Aphids excrement is a material referred to as Honeydew. This excrement is highly nutritious which further documents the waste created by their activity. This honeydew will attract all kinds of other insects which will literally farm it as food for their developing colonies. More common insects that will take advantage of local aphid populations include ants and wasps. Once they start to prosper they will eventually become a problem in and around the home. A large percentage of the ant infestations we are called upon to resolve is due to the fact that the ants wanted to live there because the aphid population was so large providing good food at some time. However, when the aphids leave for new feeding areas the ants are left to fend for themselves which is why they end up in the home. Controlling those aphids early on in the season would have prevented the ant infestations which were then able to develop.

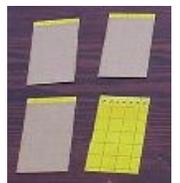
5) This same Honeydew is both corrosive and fosters fungus. Cars, furniture and structures are all susceptible to the damage which honeydew will cause. This sap like gel will stain and mar the finish of cars, plastic and siding of homes and other buildings. Furthermore, the Honeydew will allow certain fungus to grow which in turn can discolor and stain surfaces or plants on which it is growing.

6) Aphids serve as vectors of disease and will readily transfer fungus and other pathogens from one tree or plant to another. Their biting and piercing mouth parts allow bacteria and other contaminants to be passed on which exposes the disease to new plants. Many of these plants cannot survive both the aphids feeding and these new diseases they must contend with which ultimately causes death.

Since Aphids are such a common pest found throughout the entire country, most people accept that they will have them at some point in time. Furthermore, they accept the damage the aphids will do and feel that this is part of having a garden and that there is nothing that can be done to stop them. This defeatist attitude is not a healthy one nor one which is in the best interest of any plant you are attempting to grow. Most importantly, there are many things that can be done both before and after aphid activity is present.

## APHID PROBLEMS

Aphid problems can be detected early and then controlled by installing some **APHID TRAPS** before they get active and established. Their bright color will attract females who are looking to lay eggs to start new colonies. Set traps out on plants which you want to protect and foraging aphids will readily be lured onto the sticky glue which will trap and kill them. This in turn can really help reduce the chance of significant nests getting established.



Aphid Traps: <http://www.bugspraycart.com/traps/glue/aphidwhitefly-trap-4-pk>



Fortunately, aphids are easy to kill. They are susceptible to many products but some work better than others because of the way in which they work. Though you can apply some Aphid Alarm to plants which have activity, it will take at least 5-10 days to start working and even then it may never get rid of all which are there. Clearly Aphid Alarm works best when used before aphids are established and thriving. If you have waited too long to apply them and you don't want the remedial control the Traps have to offer, there are several products which can be sprayed on the plants that will offer immediate and sometimes long term control.

## ORGANIC APHID SPRAY

If you are keeping an organic garden and need to do some aphid control, we have organic gardening certified products which are both safe and effective. The most common product that has been used over the years is **INSECTICIDAL SOAP**. Using potassium salt of fatty acids for the active, Insecticidal Soap is both fast acting and short lived. This means it won't last long once it's applied so you will have to use it over and over during the growing season. In the past few years there has been a few more products that have been certified for organic gardening which work better including **MULTI PURPOSE INSECT KILLER** and **3 IN 1 FIM**. Both of these products come in a concentrate form like the Soap and need to be applied with a good **PUMP SPRAYER** so you will be making up product as needed. This insures it's fresh and will be effective; many "ready to use" organic formulations lose a lot of power when sitting on the retailers shelf for long periods of time so we don't recommend anything pre mixed. But we do recommend one ready to use aerosol called **ORGANIC HOUSE PLANT INSECT KILLER**. This aerosol is ideal for small infestations, like the kind you might see in a potted plant or herb garden. Use it weekly to insure aphids don't get active; more frequent treatments can be done as needed. And all these products are certified for organic gardening by the NOP so they bear the Organic Gardening Logo on their label. Be sure to only use products which bear this logo as this is the only way you can be sure something is safe.



Insect Soap: <http://www.bugspraycart.com/organic/liquid/insecticidal-soap>

Organic Insect Killer: <http://www.bugspraycart.com/organic/liquid/multi-purpose-insect-killer-24-oz>

3 in 1 Spray: <http://www.bugspraycart.com/organic/liquid/3-in-1-fungicide-miticide-insecticide>

Pump Sprayer: <http://www.bugspraycart.com/good/pump-sprayers>

House Plant Insect Killer: <http://www.bugspraycart.com/organic/aerosol/houseplant-insect-killer-10-oz>



Since aphids have a tendency to hide on the underside of leaves and behind flower petals, they can easily avoid direct contact of your spray. When using organic products that don't last long, it's vital that you get a good thorough spray done when treating. This is because once your spray has time to dry, there won't be much of anything left behind to get returning aphids so take time to do a good job.



## APHID CONTROL DUSTS

Dusting plants has long been a proven way to get good coverage, good control and long lasting results. The only drawback from this method is that it can be somewhat unsightly. However, many people like the light dust which is visible following any treatment because the applicator is able to see that they got good coverage. Knowing just where you sprayed can sometimes be hard and takes a trained eye to see but anyone can tell just where the dust has covered which insures no aphids will avoid the application. **DELTAMETHRIN DUST** is a great product to use for such applications. Apply it with either a **HAND DUSTER** for small jobs or a **DUSTIN MIZER** for large jobs. The Dustin Mizer has an optional Deflector which works by angling the dust up towards the bottom side of the plant which is where aphids like to hide. Deltamethrin Dust will work quickly, leave a white visible dust where applied and will last several weeks when applied properly. It can be used on anything none edible and won't hurt any plant – one of the key features of any dust.



Delta Dust: <http://www.bugspraycart.com/insecticide/dust/deltamethrin-dust>

Hand Duster: <http://www.bugspraycart.com/equipment/dusters/crusader>

Dustin Mizer: <http://www.bugspraycart.com/equipment/dusters/dustin-mizerdeflector>



If you have fruit or vegetable plants you need to treat, use **PERMETHRIN DUST** to treat them. Permethrin Dust is just as effective but it won't last nearly as long. Most applications will break down in a few days which makes the product good to use when treating plants which are growing crops that will be consumed in a short time. Apply it with either a Hand Duster or the Dustin Mizer to insure good coverage and don't waste your time using Sevin Dust – in won't work well at all for aphids!



Permethrin Dust: <http://www.bugspraycart.com/insecticide/dust/viper-perm-dust-4-lb>



## APHID CONTROL SPRAY CONCENTRATES

Insecticide Concentrates which are mixed with water and applied with a sprayer will offer the quickest and most efficient control once you have aphid activity. There are several things to consider when deciding just which one to use and if you are not getting the desired results using some of the more gentle approaches listed above, you should consider any of these for fast elimination.

If you need to treat some type of food producing plant which will bear vegetables or fruit and you want the strongest material available, use **PERMETHRIN CONCENTRATE**. This odorless material can be sprayed directly on any part of the plant and will last about 1 week per application. There will be a period following the application during which you should not harvest the produce which is usually about 7-14 days. If you don't have a sprayer or would like something a little easier to apply, the **CYONARA RTS** might be better suited for your needs. It too is a sprayable concentrate but it comes in a handy "ready to spray" quart jug. Just hook it up to your garden hose, turn it on and your ready to go. It's odorless, very effective against aphids and you get good coverage from each quart.



Vegetables Plus Perm: <http://www.bugspraycart.com/insecticide/liquid/veg-plus-10-perm>

Cyonara RTS: <http://www.bugspraycart.com/insecticide/liquid/cyonara-32-oz-rts>



The strongest material to use for aphids is a product called **BIFEN**. This uses the latest generation of synthetic pyrethrin which is very active on aphids and goes a long way as well. It will provide a quick knockdown, last a long time so you don't have to apply it frequently and will work on just about any problem pest on the plant. To apply any of these products, you will need to use one of our **SPRAYERS**. Several will do the job and we are sure to have one that will fit your application needs.



Bifen IT: <http://www.bugspraycart.com/insecticide/liquid/bifen>

Pump Sprayer: <http://www.bugspraycart.com/good/pump-sprayers>



## **APHID CONTROL SPECIAL ADDITIVES (they help make the spray work better)**

These next two products are specialty products which will both enhance the performance of Permethrin, Cyfluthrin or Bifen and save the amount of time you spend doing actual spraying. Keep in mind they should only be used with one of these three concentrates which are sprayed. Also, they are not applied separately. Instead, they are mixed with the concentrate in the sprayer at the same time. If you want to get the best performance out of any spray application, use these materials in the tank mix. They will enable any of the concentrates to last longer, perform more completely and do a better job.

The first additive you should definitely use is called **SPREADER STICKER**. This is almost a necessity when treating for aphids. This is because aphids typically like to hide on the bottom of leaves, under flowers and in any place of the plant which will provide shelter from direct sun, rain and predators. This natural instinctive behavior helps to protect them from being directly sprayed. Unless you are very careful, it is very easy to miss key locations of the plant where aphids may be hiding. Since they tend to lock onto certain parts of the host plant, they may not move for some time so residual protection from the concentrate being used won't solve this problem; if they don't walk on treated surfaces of the plant they won't be affected by the treatment. To help prevent this from happening, Spreader Sticker should be mixed with the concentrate. Spreader Sticker is a special agent which essentially causes any spray mix to "spread" out when it lands on targeted surfaces. This spreading out will help insure you don't miss certain key areas where aphids may be hiding and living. So good is this effect that leaves of plants which are sprayed on top can get good coverage on the bottom side even if the bottom of the leaf is not specifically targeted. This is very important since aphids will readily choose to live on the underside of leaves and applying chemical there is critical to the success of the treatment. The use of Spreader Sticker in the tank mix will help insure a thorough treatment.



Spreader Sticker: <http://www.bugspraycart.com/insecticide/additive/spreader-sticker>



The second additive which should be considered – though not as important as the Spreader Sticker – is a growth regulator known as **NYLAR**. This chemical is in the family of juvenile growth hormones. These types of chemicals are used to impact developing young so they are not able to fully mature or grow up. Such products are used quite successfully for ants, roaches, fleas and other insects. In fact, there are several which have been created for aphids but are only available in a very large size. However, we do have the concentrate available in smaller sizes which can be added to the tank mix much like the Spreader Sticker. In fact, the best tank mix you can create will include the Adulticide (either Permethrin, Cyfluthrin or Bifen), Spreader Sticker and Nylar. This combination would cover all bases and allow you to get the most effect from your work. Not only would the adulticide be killing off adult aphids but the spreader sticker would be insuring the coverage is as complete as possible and the Nylar would be working against any young preventing them from becoming reproducing adults. For anyone which has had a hard time controlling this pest, use this formulation if you want to knock them out once and for all.



Nylar: <http://www.bugspraycart.com/insecticide/igr/igr-nylar>



Make no mistake about aphids. They are a small and fragile insect which are easy to kill but due to their unique reproductive capabilities can present a persistent and annoying pest in gardens and landscaping. Their chewing and piercing mouthparts will cause stress and damage to plant life which probably don't need this extra attention. Disease can be spread by aphids, their honeydew excretions will attract a lot of other insect pests in and around the home and weakened plants will become that much more susceptible to heat, drought and other stresses during the growing season. For all these reasons and more you need to address aphid infestations with the intent to eliminate and keep them away for good. Follow our guidelines for preventing them by installing Aphid Alarms before they are present along with some Aphid Traps. Once established on plants, use Insecticidal Soap, Permethrin Dust or Permethrin Concentrate on any sensitive or food plant which must be treated. For non-produce plants and trees, use any of the strong concentrates we have featured along with some Spreader Sticker to get quick knockdown and long residual. Add some Nylar if you want to break the aphid cycle for good during the growing season.

## CONTACT US

Give us a call if you need further help. Our toll free is **1-800-877-7290** and we're open **Monday through Thursday, 8:00 AM to 7:00 PM. On Friday, 8:30 AM to 5:00 PM and on Saturday, 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM (Eastern Standard Time).**

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