



Bucks Country Gardens

Pest Alert Spruce Spider Mite

DESCRIPTION

Spruce Spider Mites are considered to be the most destructive spider mites in the United States. This species attacks Spruce, Arborvitae, Juniper, Hemlock, Pine, Douglas Fir and occasionally other conifers. Spruce trees seem to be their favorite host plants. The adults are about 1/2 mm long. Eggs are oval to circular and reddish-brown.

LIFE CYCLE

Spruce Spider Mites overwinter as eggs tucked in and around bud scales and at the base of needles. These hatch in the spring, usually before growth starts. The young pale green mites resemble adults except they are smaller and have only three pairs of legs. As the mites mature, they shed their skin three times before becoming adults. Adults have four pairs of legs and are dark green to nearly black with the body surface clothed with salmon-pink colored spines. Legs of the adults are also salmon-pink. A generation from egg to adult may require 15-20 days and generations frequently overlap so that all stages can be found on host plants throughout the summer. There are 7-10 generations produced each year.

DAMAGE

Spruce Spider Mites damage host plants by sucking plant sap from the needles as they feed. Infested trees initially have a speckled-yellowish appearance, and lack rich green color. After prolonged feeding, needles turn rusty colored and may drop prematurely. Mites usually attack older needles located in the lower and inner parts of the tree. Damage spreads toward the tree top as the season progresses. Spruce Spider Mites also produce silken webs on the needles.

MONITORING & DETECTION

When plant foliage begins to show off-green color and mites are suspected, make a foliage check. Take a piece of white paper, hold it under a branch suspected of having mites and strike the branch hard against the paper. This should dislodge the mites, and even though they are only 1/50th of an inch long, you should be able to see the dark oval mites against the white background. Check 3-4 places around the tree. If you dislodge 10 or more mites at each site, it would be advisable to apply a control measure.

CONTROL

Formulations of horticulture spray oil (Sunspray 6E, Sunspray Ultra Fine Spray Oil, etc.), dicofol (Kelthane, fluvalinate (Mavrik Aquaflow), insecticidal soap (M-Pede, Insecticidal Soap, etc.), and oxythioquinox (Morestan) are labeled for Spruce Spider Mite control. Apply a registered formulation to kill mites hatching from eggs. If mite populations persist, repeat applications may be necessary. Monitor mite populations prior to applying a control measure. Follow all label directions for specific information on host plant label clearance.