

Azalea lace bug

Stephanitis pyrioides



In 2008, the Azalea lace bug was confirmed in Washington state when damage was first noticed on the evergreen azalea. Susceptible plants include Rhododendron, Kalmia latifolia (Mountain Laurel), Pieris japonica (Andromeda) as well as Azaleas.

Lifecycle

Azalea lace bug overwinters in the egg stage. Eggs are generally laid along the midrib on the underside of leaves and covered with dark brown excrement. Adults can lay 300 eggs, at the rate of 5 to 7 eggs per day.

Upon emergence, the immature lace bugs, or nymphs, are nearly translucent. They quickly change to a light yellowish green. As they age, they darken, particularly on the abdomen, and become spiny. Adult lace bugs are around ¼ inch long. Their wings are covered with a network of veins and lightly colored with white and black patterns creating a windowpane effect.

Type of Damage

Lace bugs have piercing-sucking mouthparts. They feed on the lower surface of leaves by inserting their straw-like stylets into the leaf tissue and removing the chlorophyll which leaves light yellow stippling on the upper surface of the leaves. Lace bugs deposit very visible black fecal spots on the underside of leaves and white, molted skins are often present.

Early Detection is key

Careful examination of the lower surface of leaves is helpful to detect newly emerged nymphs. Monitor closely when overwintering eggs are expected to hatch (mid-May to early June). Timing is important for management. Leaf stippling is seen first on older leaves, then appears later younger leaves as the lace bugs disperse. Early season control is very important to reduce future generations and to prevent damage. On rhododendrons, severe damage looks like iron chlorosis, with yellow leaves and green veins. Azalea lace bug nymphs tend to stay in clusters.

Biological control: A variety of predators are reported to feed on azalea lace bugs. Earwigs, green lacewings, lady beetles, minute pirate bugs, spiders, and tree crickets.

Cultural control: Plants grown in the shade and those who have experienced drought-stress are more prone to attack. Additionally, choosing a resistant variety is half the battle. Encore Azalea cultivars that have been found to be resistant include: Autumn Amethyst, Autumn Twist, Autumn Royalty, Autumn Sangria, Autumn Cheer, and Autumn Rouge. (see link at the bottom of this page for more information)

Chemical Control: Pest management programs based on least toxic controls may incorporate products such as insecticidal soap, horticultural oil, microbial, and botanically based products for management of azalea lace bug. Insecticidal soaps and oils are most efficacious on newly hatched nymphs and **must directly contact** the insects to control them. Complete coverage, particularly on the leaf underside, is critical.

Source:

<https://extension.oregonstate.edu/sites/default/files/documents/em9066.pdf>



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Rev: 10/30/24