



Azalea lace bug

Stephanitis pyrioides

Order Hemiptera, Family Tingidae; lace bugs
Introduced pest

Host plants: Evergreen azaleas are preferred, but deciduous varieties are also susceptible.

Description: Adult lace bugs are 3 mm long with transparent wings that are held flat over the back. Two grayish-brown bands cross the lacy wings. Immature azalea lace bugs are dark-colored and spiny.

Life history: Eggs are partially imbedded in leaf tissue. There are at least two generations in the North.

Overwintering: Eggs in leaf tissue.

Damage symptoms: Feeding by adults and immatures causes a white stippling visible on the upper leaf surface. Varnish-like deposits of black excrement occur on the leaf under surface. Heavy infestations of plants in full sun can lead to plant death.

Monitoring: Plants in full sun should be monitored for the first signs of damage. Look for white stippling on older leaves beginning in May. Look on the under surface of stippled leaves for lace bug stages and for “varnish” spots of black excrement.

Cultural control: Azaleas should be planted in partial shade. Plants in full sun usually suffer the earliest and most severe damage, and beneficial insects are usually unable to control these bugs in sunny situations.

Chemical control: Only the systemic pesticides acephate and dimethoate are effective when sprayed on the tops of leaves. Contact chemicals should be sprayed on the under surface of leaves and are most effective in July before August when bugs are numerous.

Biological control: Encouraging natural enemies is important. Green lacewings, predatory mites, and assassin bugs all attack lace bugs and will generally keep lace bug population in check in the shade. However, these predators often arrive after considerable damage has occurred. In order to conserve natural enemies, use insecticidal soaps or oils instead of conventional insecticides.

Plant mortality risk: Moderate

Biorational pesticides: azadirachtin, horticultural oil, insecticidal soap, pyrethrins

Conventional pesticides: acephate, bifenthrin, carbaryl, chlorpyrifos (nursery only), cyfluthrin, deltamethrin, fluralinate, imidacloprid, lambda-cyhalothrin, malathion, permethrin



Azalea lace bug adult with black fecal spots on a leaf. (17)
Photo: John Davidson



Azalea lace bug nymphs. (18)
Photo: Christine Casey