



Clover mite

Bryobia praetiosa

Order Acari, Family Tetranychidae; spider mites
Native pest

Host plants: Grasses, clovers, ornamental flowers, common on honeysuckle

Description: Adult clover mites are eight-legged, reddish or brownish, and smaller than a pinhead. After feeding, they appear greenish-brown. They are easily distinguished from other mites by a pair of front legs that extend forward and that are longer than the body and twice as long as any of the other legs.

Life history: Adult males have not been found in the U.S. Females are parthenogenetic, producing up to 70 eggs during the summer months without mating. Damage occurs in early spring to early summer and again in late summer and early fall. The entire life span may be 1 to 7 months. Eggs are deposited in the fall in cracks and crevices of foundations, walls, tree bark, debris, and rocks; eggs hatch in spring; larvae migrate to grasses, clovers, and other host plants to feed; larvae molt into nymphs and then into adults. Clover mites are inactive during winter, becoming active again in spring. Two or more generations are produced each year.

Overwintering: Clover mites can pass the winter in any stage; eggs can be found on trees and shrubs. Overwintering adults are a nuisance pest when they move into structures for the winter.

Damage symptoms: Mites consume contents of punctured plant cells, removing chlorophyll and leaving plants with a silvered appearance. In the fall, thousands of mites and webbing can drape over branches causing a nuisance. However, the mites are aggregating for the winter and pose no threat. Clover mite injury to turf is often mistaken for winter kill and is found in the same sunny, dry areas of the lawn where winter drying problems occur. During early to mid spring, clover mites also may damage turfgrass around building foundations and in other warm, dry areas of the lawn. Feeding damage appears as small, meandering silver streaks in the leaves. When mite populations are high, leaves may be extensively injured and die. Areas of grass become light brown with irregular dead patches.

During October and November, clover mites seek protected areas to overwinter and may move into homes in large numbers. Sometimes they spin huge webs on tree trunks. Although they do not bite people, transmit diseases or feed on household furnishings, they can be a serious nuisance. When crushed, clover mites leave rusty red stains that are noticeable on white surfaces.

Cultural control: Water mite-damaged areas, especially adjacent to buildings and walks.



Clover mite adult, notice the long front legs and four anterior setae on tubercles. (64)

Photo: John Davidson

Monitoring: Inspect premises for mites and hiding places. Clover mites concentrate on warmer (southern, western) sites, especially where reflective surfaces add warmth.

Cultural control: Clear all weeds, excess vegetation and debris away from buildings to reduce hiding places and dry out areas. If possible, create a physical barrier, such as a bare strip of ground in an 18–24 inch wide strip around foundations. Plants not attractive to clover mites can also serve as barriers. They include petunia, salvia, geranium, chrysanthemum, rose, zinnia, yew, and arborvitae.

Chemical control: Insecticides should be sprayed in a band 10–15 feet wide around the building foundation and on the lower portions of outside walls. Spray thoroughly around vegetation, doors, windows, and window-wells.

Biological control: Natural predators of mites include big-eyed bugs, minute pirate bugs, and predatory mites.

Plant mortality risk: Low

Biorational pesticides: abamectin, bifenthrin, clofentazine, hexythiazox, horticultural oil, insecticidal soap

Conventional pesticides: bifenthrin, chlorpyrifos (nursery only), deltamethrin, dicofol, fenpropathrin, fenbutatin oxide, lambda-cyhalothrin, pyridaben