Eggplant Pests – Spider Mites

fact sheet

What are Spider Mites?

Spider mites, or webspinning mites, are part of the arachnid class and belong to the genus *Tetranychus*. Spider mites colonize by the hundreds mostly on the undersides of leaves. The 8-legged tiny creatures (1.27 mm) are easily distinguished from other mite species by the presence of silk or webbing. Mites favor hot, dry, and dusty conditions, where generations can be completed in under a week.

Spider mite webbing on leaves[1]

What is the Damage Caused?

Spider mite feeding can cause significant cellular damage that is visible on leaves as tiny light spots (stippling). Severe infestations may cause leaf drop, resulting in sun burning of fruits and reduced yields. Webspinning spider mites tend to be more damaging at lower densities than other mite pests.

How to Manage Spider Mites in Eggplant?

Monitor: Inspect leaves for signs of mite infestations such as stippling and webbing. Use a magnifying lens to detect mites on the undersides of leaves. Shaking foliage over a white sheet of paper can aid in the detection of mites. Mite populations may disappear soon after damage has occurred.

Cultural Management: Dusty conditions favor spider mite population growth, especially when temperatures are high. Control dust by regularly spraying water on dirt roads. Water-stressed plants favor spider mite populations. Properly irrigate plants and, if necessary, sprinkle plants mid-season to prevent large outbreaks later in the season.

Pesticide Treatment Options:

Note that the use of some pesticides to control other insects can cause spider mite populations to increase dramatically. Avoid applying carbaryl (Sevin*), organophosphates, and pyrethroids. Excessive nitrogen in leaves and can cause mite population explosions, especially in hot weather.

- Insecticidal soaps, insecticidal oils, neem oils, and petroleum-based horticultural oils are all affective against mites if direct contact is made. Be sure to soak the undersides of leaves and other mite hot spots (areas with large populations). Repeated applications may be necessary. Do not apply soaps or oils to water stressed plants in temperatures above 32°C; they may be toxic to crop plants.
- Sulfur dust at labeled rates may provide protection. Sulfur can also burn plants if temperatures are above 32°C. Sulfur cannot be used on cucurbits (melons, pumpkins, cucumbers).

For more treatment options visit www.ipm.ucdavis.edu

*Commercial name. The authors make no endorsement towards commercial brands mentioned in this document nor are the absence of other brand names an implication of our disapproval.

Prepared by Frank Zalom, Emily Symmes, Mark Henderson and Mark Bell 2009

Sources: Statewide IPM Program, Agriculture and Natural Resources, University of California http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/index.html

Photo: [1]Jack Kelly Clark – UC IPM

For more information visit: International Programs: http://ip.ucdavis.edu