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## Common Indoor Pests

### Aphids (Family Aphididae)



*Bean aphids*



*Cabbage aphids*



*Green peach aphids*



*Melon aphid winged adult*



*Damage*



*Woolly apple aphids*

**Description:** Adults are pear-shaped,  $\frac{1}{32}$ "- $\frac{1}{8}$ " insects with 2 short tubes projecting backward from the abdomen; long antennae; green, pink, black, dusty gray, or with white fluffy coating; with or without wings. Nymphs are similar to adults. Colonies develop quickly; winged forms appear when they become crowded.

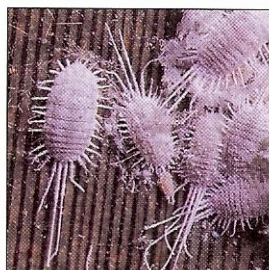
**Damage:** Adults and nymphs suck plant sap from most small fruits, vegetables, ornamentals, and shade trees. Their feeding causes leaf, bud, and flower distortions; severely infested leaves and flowers drop. Fruit that forms on infested branches are misshapen and stunted. Aphids secrete sticky honeydew that supports growth of sooty mold on leaves and fruit. Feeding can spread viral diseases.

**Control:** For vegetable crops and small ornamentals, spray smaller plants frequently with a strong stream of water to knock aphids off; attract native predators and parasites by planting pollen and nectar plants; release purchased aphid midges, lady beetles, lacewings, or parasitic wasps; use homemade garlic, quassia or tomato-leaf sprays; spray insecticidal soap; as a last resort, spray infested plants with pyrethrin or neem. For fruit or shade trees, spray dormant oil to kill overwintering eggs, and plant flowering groundcovers in home orchards to attract predators and

### Mealybugs (Family Pseudococcidae)



*Citrus mealybugs*



*Longtailed mealybugs*

**Description:** Adult females are soft, oval,  $\frac{1}{10}$ " insects with distinctly segmented, pinkish bodies covered by white waxy fluff; males are tiny, 2 winged insects rarely seen. Nymphs are similar to adults, but smaller.

**Damage:** Adults and nymphs suck plant juices from many types of fruit crops, potatoes, ornamentals, and tropical foliage plants. They feed on all parts of a plant, particularly new growth, causing leaves to wither and yellow and fruit to drop prematurely. Honeydew excreted on leaves supports the growth of sooty mold fungus.

**Control:** Rinse plants with stiff streams of water to dislodge mealybugs; spray with insecticidal soap.

## Mites, Spider (Family Tetranychidae)



*Two-spotted spider mite*



*Adults and webbing*



*Damage*

**Description:** Adults are minute, 8-legged,  $\frac{1}{50}$ " mites with fine hairs on body, reddish, pale green or yellow; most, but not all, species spin fine webs. Nymphs are similar to adults, but smaller; early stages with 6 legs.

**Damage:** Adults and nymphs suck juice from cells on undersides of leaves of many food crops, ornamentals, and fruit trees. Plants are weakened, leaves may drop and fruit may be stunted. Early damage appears as yellow speckled areas, with or without webbing, on leaf undersides; later, leaves are bronzed or turn yellow or white with brown edges, webs may cover leaves and growing tips.

**Control:** Spray dormant oil on fruit trees to kill overwintering eggs; in garden rinse plants with water and mist daily to suppress reproduction of mites; release predatory mites *Metaseiulus occidentalis* on fruit trees, *Phytoseiulus persimilis* or similar species on vegetables, strawberries, and flowers; spray insecticidal soap, pyrethrin, or neem; as a last resort, spray infested plants with avermectins.

## Thrips (Family Thripidae)



*Greenhouse thrips*



*Western flower thrips*



*Damage*



*Damage*

**Description:** Adults are slender,  $\frac{1}{50}$ " -  $\frac{1}{25}$ " long insects; colors range from yellowish to brown or black; these fast-moving insects leap or fly away on narrow, fringed wings when disturbed; individual insects are difficult to see with a magnifying glass. Nymphs are similar to small adults; light green or yellow, some with red eyes.

**Damage:** Adults and nymphs suck contents of plant cells from a variety of garden plants, flowers, fruits, and shade trees. Their feeding leaves silvery speckling or streaks on leaves; severe infestations stunt plants and damage flowers and developing fruit; some species spread tomato spotted wilt virus.

**Control:** Spray dormant oil on fruit trees; encourage native predators, such as pirate bugs, lacewings, and lady beetles, for onion or western flower thrips, release the predatory mite *Amblyseius cucumeris* or minute pirate bugs; hang blue or yellow sticky traps to catch adults; spray insecticidal soap, pyrethrin, or neem; as a last resort, dust undersides of leaves with diatomaceous earth.

## Whiteflies (Family Aleyrodidae)



*Citrus whiteflies*



*Greenhouse whitefly larvae*



*Greenhouse whiteflies*



*Sweet potato whiteflies*

**Description:** Adults are minute sucking insects with powdery white wings; whiteflies rest in huge numbers on leaf undersides and fly out in clouds when disturbed. Larvae are flattened, legless, translucent,  $\frac{1}{30}$ " scales on leaf undersides. Eggs are gray or yellow cones the size of a pinpoint.

**Damage:** Nymphs and adults suck plant juices from citrus, foliage plants, ornamentals, and vegetables. Their feeding weakens plants; they also secrete a sticky, sugary substance called honeydew. Sooty mold, a black fungus, grows on the honeydew coated leaves and fruit.

**Control:** Catch adults on yellow sticky traps, spray with insecticidal soap or garlic oil, or as a last resort, spray with pyrethrin.

For more info, see **The Organic Gardener's Handbook of Natural Insect and Disease Control**