

# Common Houseplant Pests and How to Treat

## Pests:

### Spider Mites:

- **Description:** Tiny, web-spinning pests that are often red or yellow. They thrive in dry conditions and can cause yellowing and stippling on leaves.
- **Damage:** Feeding on plant sap leads to yellowing leaves and a decline in plant health. Severe infestations can cause leaf drop.

### Aphids:

- **Description:** Small, soft-bodied insects, usually green, yellow, or black. They gather in clusters on new growth, stems, and the undersides of leaves.
- **Damage:** Aphids suck sap from plants, causing leaves to curl, yellow, and stunt growth. They also excrete honeydew, which can lead to sooty mold.

### Mealybugs:

- **Description:** White, cottony masses found on stems, leaf joints, and undersides of leaves. They excrete a sticky substance called honeydew.
- **Damage:** Mealybugs suck sap from plants, weakening them and causing yellowing leaves, stunted growth, and leaf drop.

### Scale:

- **Description:** Hard, shell-like insects that attach to stems and leaves. They can be brown, black, or white and are often mistaken for part of the plant.
- **Damage:** Scale insects suck sap from plants, causing yellowing leaves, stunted growth, and overall decline in plant health. Severe infestations can kill the plant.

## **Treatment:**

### **Identification:**

- **Regular Inspections:** Inspect plants regularly, especially the undersides of leaves and along stems. Look for signs of pests or damage, such as discoloration, webbing, or sticky residue.

### **Natural Remedies:**

- **Neem Oil:** A natural insecticide that can be sprayed on plants to kill pests and prevent infestations.
- **Insecticidal Soap:** Safe for most houseplants, this soap suffocates pests and should be applied directly to the affected areas.
- **Water and Dish Soap Mixture:** A homemade remedy of water mixed with a few drops of dish soap can be sprayed on plants to control pests.

### **Chemical Treatments:**

- **Systemic Insecticides:** Use as a last resort for severe infestations. These insecticides are absorbed by the plant and kill pests feeding on it. Follow label instructions carefully to avoid harm to plants and beneficial insects.

## **Prevention:**

- **Quarantine New Plants:** Keep new plants separate from your existing collection for a few weeks to ensure they are pest-free before introducing them.
- **Proper Watering and Fertilization:** Healthy plants are more resistant to pests. Avoid overwatering and over-fertilizing, which can attract pests.
- **Increase Air Circulation:** Good air circulation reduces the likelihood of pest infestations. Use fans or place plants where there is natural airflow.

By following these steps, you can effectively manage common houseplant pests and keep your plants healthy and thriving. Regular monitoring and prompt treatment are key to preventing serious infestations.