

MIND THOSE MITES:

Scouting and Control Tips for Poinsettia



How can you control Lewis mite and spider mite populations on your poinsettia crop?

BY JOANNE LUTZ

Most growers would agree that summer conditions favor spider mites. Warm temperatures shorten life cycles, causing explosive mite populations. As weather shifts from hot and dry to cooler conditions with longer nights during poinsettia season, mite pressure is reduced.

EARLY DETECTION

Lewis mites and, occasionally, spider mites can be problematic for poinsettias. Growers are often challenged to tell the difference between the two species. Both prefer to feed on the undersides of leaves, laying eggs closest to the midrib. Both mites will produce webbing, though Lewis mites only do this when the infestation is heavy.

Mites won't be found on sticky cards, so scouting for early detection of eggs or mites is especially crucial. Concentrate scouting in areas of the greenhouse where air movement is highest. This is where you'll find the lower humidity that mites prefer.

Mature foliage may begin to reveal symptoms that mimic nutritional deficiencies. Observe foliage for faint light green to yellow speckling. Mites can be easily identified with the use of a hand lens while examining the undersides of leaves. A useful tool is the beating tray to tap

	Two-Spotted Spider Mite	Lewis Mite
Host range	Multiple hosts. Pest of field crops and greenhouse plants.	Multiple hosts. Mainly greenhouse pest. AKA poinsettia spider mite.
Male	Wedge-shaped, 0.3 mm	Wedge-shaped, mustard-colored, 0.25 mm
Female	Oval, 0.4-0.5 mm. Single dark spot on either side of the body	Oval, 0.36 mm. Multiple small spots
Life stages	Egg, larva, protonymph, deutonymph and adult	Egg, larva, protonymph, deutonymph and adult, though males have only one nymphal stage
Egg	Round, clear initially and turns whitish as it matures	Round, pale-greenish and turns light orange with maturity
Egg laying	About 100 eggs in 10 days	About 60-90 eggs in a month days
Life cycle	Five to 20 days depending on temperature	12 to 14 days at 70° F
Diapause	Ceases reproduction during decreasing temperatures and food supplies	Continuously reproduces without diapause
Damage	Feeds undersurface of leaves. Causes yellow mottling, scarring, bronzing and leaf fall-off	Similar to Two-spotted spider mites
Webbing	Prominent	At high infestation levels
Predatory mites	<i>Phytoseiulus persimilis</i> , <i>Neoseiulus californicus</i> , <i>N. fallacis</i> , <i>Amblyseius andersoni</i> , etc.	<i>N. californicus</i> , <i>N. fallacis</i> , <i>A. andersoni</i> , etc.

Chart courtesy of Surendra Dara, University of California

	MOA	Spider mites	Lewis Mites
Akari 5SC	21A	X	X
Avid 0.15 EC, Minx 2	6	X	X
Beethoven TR	10B	X	X
Floramite SC	20D	X	some
Kontos*	23	X	
Sanmite 75 WSP	21A	X	
Savate/Judo	23	X	X
Shuttle O	20B	X	X
Sirocco SC	6/20D	X	X
Sultan	25	X	
Tetrasan 5 WDG	10B	X	X



Lewis mite damage on poinsettia.

*Drench only, applied early in crop

Note: Pylon cannot be used on poinsettias.

foliage for mite presence. Against white paper, mites may appear like moving speckles of black pepper. The chart on page 28 provides key characteristics of both mite species.

TAKING CONTROL

Unless growers are certain which mite is present, we recommend miticides that control both species, making two applications one week apart.

CapSil is a high-quality surfactant that improves spray coverage. During poinsettia bract formation, CapSil rates are reduced to 4 ounces per 100

gallons. To ensure plant safety, limit CapSil applications to a maximum of one per week.

Pesticide information in this article is believed to be correct at the time of publication, but it's the responsibility of the applicator to always read and follow all label directions. Labels do change without notice. Pesticides other than those listed in the table above may also be safe, legal and effective. [gpn](#)

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When is a plug more than just another plug?
When it comes from Griffin, of course.

Photo courtesy of Total Growth Solutions

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