

Garden Foe: Aphids - January 25 1994

Today I am going to speak about Aphids as they are on the hit list for pests to look out for in February. I'll mention the other nasties to look out for as well.

They are: The Bean Fly, Scales, Bird Worms in corn, bugs, cabbage moth or cabbage moth caterpillars, codling moth, fruit fly, red spider mite, white fly and of course the Aphids, both plain and woolly.

They are 1 to 2 mm long and they colour as some are green, pink, yellow, black, or grey.

The woolly ones are covered with a white, thread like wax.

Aphids are sap sucking insects which attack vegetables, garden plants, especially the new shoots, and rose buds. Also, fruit trees and ornamentals. They are a serious pest as they distort and stunt growth, crinkle foliage, and also are virus carriers. Plants that are producing new growth are most vulnerable to virus and that is when the aphids are usually prolific. So, look at the new shoots emerging on your ornamentals. Aphids cluster on the new tips and damage the tissue which reduces the new growth. I have had the minute creatures on my Mandevilla Vine, I was wondering why the ends seemed to be dying, so I got up on a chair to examine the cause and here were these tiny wee creatures feeding on the new shoots. I cleaned off as many as I could the hosed the plant well. I noticed 1 or 2 lady birds on the vine and also a number of ants running along the stems. What I found out was that Aphids exude copious quantities of sticky honey dew and this attracts ants, which discourages the predators and parasites which are the lady birds, hover flies, lace wings and wasps.

So, ant control must be considered part of aphid control. Treat eh ant nest with Diazinon, which is also available in ant killer dusts and lawn grub and insect killer mixtures. For Aphid control, Maldison is a useful insecticide. IT will also control Spider mites, scale Bugs, caterpillars, and borers but it is dangerous to bees, so it is recommended that spraying be carried out in the evening. Always read the instructions on the label of any spray you use and keep to the information provided. There are Pyrethrum sprays combined with eucalyptus oil called Multicrop.

A new synthetic pyrethrum is a low hazard for bees but effective against chewing and sucking pests, which is called Maverick. So, if you need to spray choose one that is effective and as non-toxic as possible. There is a spray for organic gardeners to use for aphids and that is 28g potassium permanganate in other words, Condyl's Crystals to 9 litres of water. Stir together and spray on foliage. This a weak insecticide which kills aphids but tends to spare their predators and it will also help control powdery mildew on crops such as strawberries and peas, It is spent within 4 hours, but leave crops for a day or two before picking.