

Garden Foe: Scales - February 22 1994

There are many different species of scale insect in Australia. They are common on many outdoor and indoor plants. They are sap sucking insects, which cause varying degrees of damage. Some are hard scaly insects, and some are soft bodied waxy creatures, which adhere to plant stems or underneath leaves.

They are usually 2-4 to 5mm long. Scales don't really resemble insects at all.

During their life cycle they are hidden under a protective coating. They over Winter as mature females on twigs where they are confined to their covers, just like wearing an overcoat to keep warm and they use the use of their legs.

In the Spring they produce "crawlies" which move out from underneath the mature scales to new feeding areas. Once the "crawlies" settle, they lose the ability to move. Several generations develop over the Summer. Look out for them in January, February, March and April. Scales are usually associated with a black sooty mold which grows on the sugary secretions which exude from the feeding scales. There are many varieties of scale which include - Red Scale, White Rose Scale, Yellow Scale, Purple Scale or Mussel Scale which resembles the mussel shell you see on the beach, only of course much smaller.

White Louse Scale, Black or Brown Olive Scale, San Josie Scale, Gum Tree Scale, Frosted Scale, Circular Black Scale, White Wax Scale, Cottony Cushion Scale, Pink Wax Scale. All of these different scales are found on a number of different plants, fruit trees, ornamentals and natives.

In an orchard, control measures should be routine each year. However, in a garden, search for scale insects and remove small numbers by hand.

For large infestations, most scales can be controlled by spraying with 2ml Malathion & 9ml white oil in a litre of water. Or Pyrethrum and All Seasons Oil in mid-March.

Also, again in late November or early December. Be careful when using oil sprays as you can burn foliage if the temperature is over 24 degrees Celsius. If in doubt, spray in overcast weather. Try brushing them off with a toothbrush or hosing with a strong jet of water.

*Handy Hint – to keep ants from your trees and plants, smear petroleum jelly around the stem.