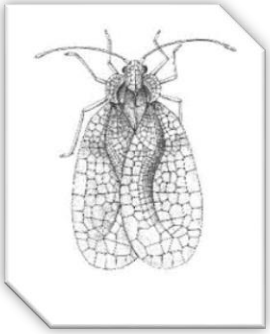

Lace Bugs Attack Azaleas and Rhododendrons

Stephanitis pyrioids and Stephanitis rhododendri

by Sue Rohde, Curator, Delbert Hunter Arboretum

I love azaleas and rhododendrons. I have many varieties of each in my yard, planted by my dad 50-60 years ago. We also have many in the arboretum, so I want to try to eliminate the Lace Bug problem as soon as possible. If you do not care about these plants, you can dig them up and eliminate the problem, however other plants, such as Walnut trees, are also possible hosts. Fortunately, there are controls for these pests.

Azalea lace bug was confirmed in 2009 in Oregon, but they did not become a problem until 2012 when discovered in Portland. Lace bugs suck chlorophyll out of leaves, impairing the plant's ability to make nutrients from sunlight. Damage from adult azalea lace bugs makes leaves look stippled with yellow or white on top, with black or brown spots (bug poo) on the underside of leaves. Multiple generations of lace bug can exist on one leaf, and each can lay 300 eggs, at the rate of five to seven eggs per day.

Rhododendron lace bugs, *Stephanitis rhododendri,* are basically like the Azalea lace bug. They look very similar and the life cycles are the same. Treatment is also the same. Begin treatment when nymphs are visible. Start looking for them in early May on the undersides of leaves. Nymphs are up to 1⁄4" long and translucent with bits of yellow-green. If you're having trouble seeing them, hold leaves up to a light and look for nymph shadows.

Lace Bug damage to leaves of plant

Chemical-Free Options: Methods include removing pests' food source (prune off the affected areas and leaves), and using beneficial organisms. Starting with the least toxic method possible, in this case, would be to use your hose and wash the lace bugs off. The adults are fairly easy to wash off. The eggs and larva are more difficult.

The Eggs: Eggs are laid along the midrib, inside the leaves (so spraying with dormant oils will not kill eggs). Eggs typically begin hatching in early-mid May and hatch over a long period of time. A second generation hatches around late June, early-July.

Treating the Nymphs and Adults

Treatment during the nymph stage is most effective. They are tiny and wings are transparent. Adults do 12 times the damage of nymphs. They insert a proboscis into pores of leaves and suck out the chlorophyll, which is what turns affected leaves white or yellow. Treating after you notice damage (once adult lace bugs are active) will not repair the stippled appearance of the leaves. Insecticides will help control lace bugs, but may also harm beneficial insects. Organic and naturally occurring insecticides must have direct contact with insects to be effective. Nymphs live on the underside of leaves, so use a hose-end or pump sprayer and make sure to coat the undersides of all leaves. To be effective, these products will require reapplication several times during hatching season. Always follow all directions on the package.

Oil - while dormant oil does not control eggs, spraying nymphs and adults with horticultural oil is effective.
Insecticidal Soap - Works for nymph and adult stages.

Chemical Alternative:
Pyrethrin spray is effective but is toxic to beneficial insects and also can be harmful to pets and humans. Use should be limited. Apply to non-blooming plants in early morning or evening when air is still and bees are not

present. Keep pets indoors until treated areas and the ground around them have dried. Wear long sleeves, gloves, protective goggles, and a dust mask during application. Never apply in an enclosed space.

Here are some “bug-resistant” varieties of Azaleas and Rhodies, but remember, resistant does not equal “bug-proof".

Standards: Elsie Lee, Flame Creeper, Delaware Valley White, Gumpo White, Hino Crimson, Macrantha, Red Wing, and Rosebud

Encore: Autumn Amethyst, Autumn Royalty, Autumn Twist, Autumn Sangria, Autumn Cheer, Autumn Rouge

Sources:

https://www.portlandnursery.com/garden-pests/azalea-lace-bug
https://hgic.clemson.edu/azalea-lace-bugs/
https://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog/pub/em9066-s

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We do not use the principal but use the interest to supplement our daily operations. The beauty of the trust fund is that the Dallas Community Foundation offers sponsorships and other benefits to the community. So, in a way, donating to the Trust Fund also contributes to our community. Won't you please consider donating part of your contribution to the Trust Fund and help maintain our nest egg for the future, and for the community? As a non-profit organization, we only do 'donation drives' twice per year when our newsletters are published. It's been a very slow year! Won't you please consider making a donation today? Thank you so much!

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