



HELPDESK HIGHLIGHTS

Weekly newsletter for Master Gardeners

WEEK 1: JULY 3-10

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TEST YOUR MASTER GARDENER SKILLS

(Answer on page 8)

Diagnose these yellow spots on an oak tree leaf!



IMAGE FROM HELPDESK

Please refer only to the current [VCE Pest Management Guide: Home Grounds and Animals](#) for pesticide recommendations. All pesticides recommended are at the risk of the user. Read and follow all label instructions for use, storage, and disposal. Remember, the pesticide label is the law.

SOOTY MOLD

Relevance: Increased prevalence during warm temperatures and dry periods

Why: Sooty mold grows on top of **honeydew**, an insect excrement high in sugar. **Summer conditions increase insect productivity**, which results in more honeydew, while less rain is available to dilute honeydew concentrations on plants. However, when conditions become wet, sooty mold germinates and affects the nearest plant with honeydew. You may also find this sticky substance on your car!



SOOTY MOLD ON A WALNUT TREE LEAF

IMAGE FROM VCE PUBLICATION 450-618

Damage to plants: does not directly affect plant tissue but can interfere with a leaf's ability to photosynthesize

Symptoms:

Black spots
Crusts of growth on foliage

Best control method:

Try to control the insect population creating honeydew

Look for these bugs:

Aphids
Scales
Mealybugs
Whiteflies

Honeydew looks like a shiny, sticky substance on plant foliage.

More Resources for Controlling Sooty Mold

[VCE Pest Management Guide: Horticultural and Forest Crops](#)

[VCE Publication: Whiteflies](#)

[VCE Publication: Aphids](#)

[VCE Publication: Sooty Mold of Conifers and Hardwoods](#)

[VCE Publication: Scale Insects](#)

[University of Massachusetts Extension: Sooty Mold](#)

POWDERY MILDEW

IMAGE FROM MISSOURI BOTANICAL GARDEN
POWDERY MILDEW ON LILAC



Relevance: Favors **warm, dry days** with cool nights while **high humidity** is necessary for spore germination.

Plants highly susceptible:

- Japanese Euonymus
- Wintercreeper Euonymus
- Crabapple cultivars
- Photinia
- Dogwood
- Lilac

POWDERY MILDEW

Symptoms:

- White to gray powdery spots, blotches or felt-like mats on leaves, stems and buds
- Plant may appear to be sprinkled with baby powder or covered in cobwebs
- Severe infection may turn leaves yellow and cause them to fall prematurely
- In some plants, leaves may turn purple to red around the infection
- In late summer/early fall, tiny round orange to black balls form within white fungal mats
- Curled leaves, stems and young shoots

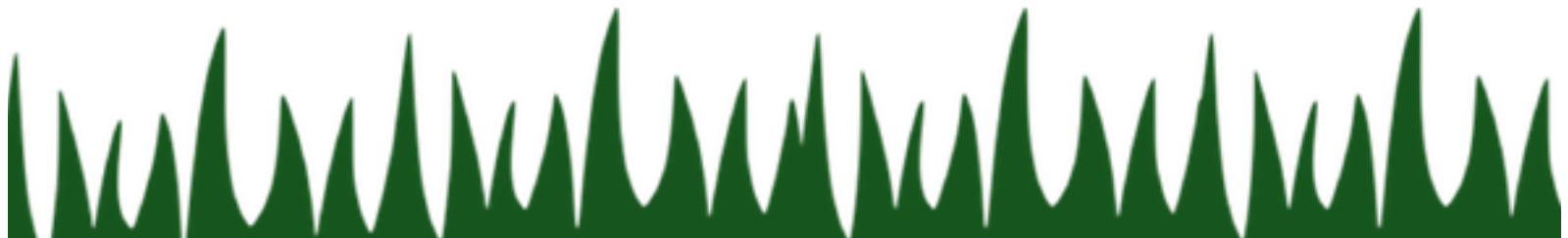
Best control method: prune plant to improve air circulation

More Resources for Controlling Powdery Mildew

[VCE Publication: *Powdery Mildew of Ornamental Plants*](#)

[University of Minnesota Extension: *Powdery Mildew*](#)

[VCE Pest Management Guide: *Home Grounds and Animals*](#)



SQUASH BUGS

IMAGES FROM HELPDESK
SQUASH BUGS ON SQUASH LEAVES



Relevance: Adults become active in June and lay eggs until mid-summer

Damage to plants: Feeding can cause leaves to turn yellow and die; significantly reduced plant growth

Eggs (right picture): shiny, elliptical, rubbery, bronze colored; in clusters of about 20 eggs

Nymphs (left picture): early ones are pale green with black legs, while later ones are gray with black legs

Adults: 5/8" long with piercing-sucking mouthparts and flattened bodies; dark brownish gray

Host preference: Summer squash & pumpkin

More Resources for Controlling Squash Bugs

[VCE: Squash Bug](#)

[University of Maryland Extension: Squash Bug - Vegetables](#)

[Penn State Extension: Squash Bug](#)

[VCE Pest Management Guide: Home Grounds and Animals](#)

TICKS

(ALL THREE IMAGES FROM VCE)

Relevance: Most active between **April to September**

Three most common ticks:



American Dog Tick:

Prevalent west of Blue Ridge Mountains

Carrier of:

Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever

Lone Star Tick:

Prevalent east of Blue Ridge Mountains

Carrier of:

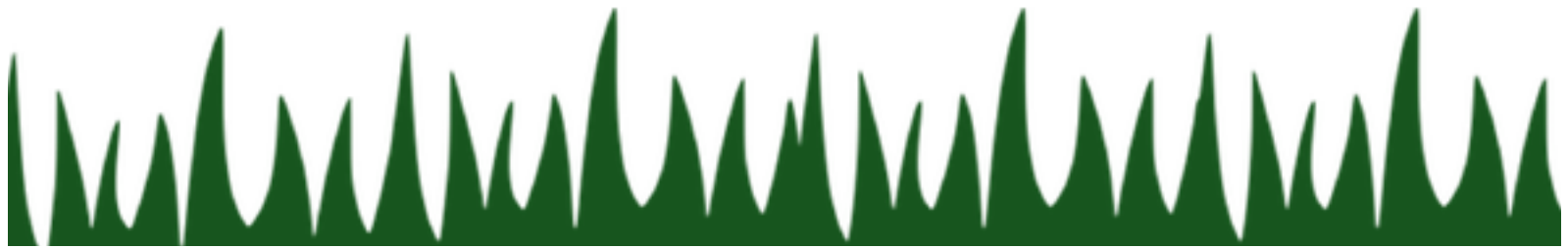
Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever

Deer Tick:

Northern and Eastern parts of VA

Carrier of:

Lyme disease



TICKS

Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever:

Tick needs to be on you for 4-6 hours

Severe headache

Chills

Fever

Muscle Aches

Nausea

Vomiting

Other flu-like symptoms

Symptoms start 2-12 days after bite

High rate of cure with early use of antibiotics

Lyme Disease:

Tick needs to be on you for 36 hours

Oblong rash of 2 inches with clear center (70% of people experience this)

Headache

Fever

Nausea

Stiffness of neck joints

Other flu-like symptoms

High rate of cure with early use of antibiotics, however some may still feel symptoms 6 months after treatment

How to prevent tick bites:

Wear light colored clothing to make tick finding easier

Conduct tick checks every four hours while outdoors

Avoid tall grass and dense vegetation

Tuck pants legs into socks

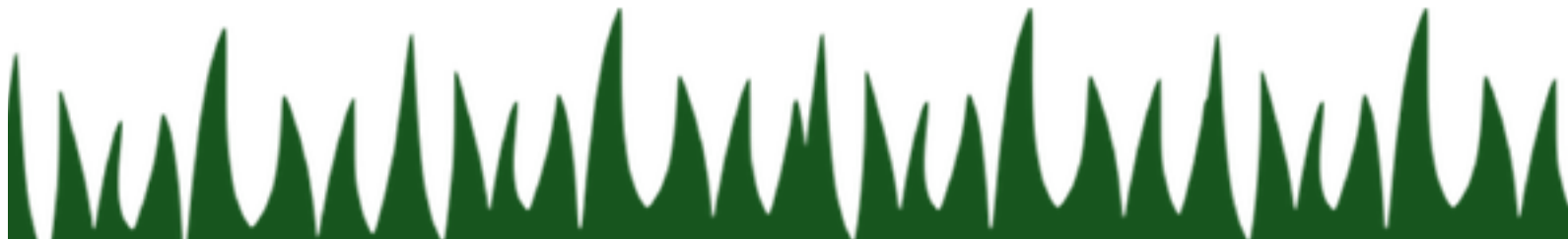
More information on prevention, tick control and ID:

[VCE: Common Ticks of Virginia](#)

[City of Alexandria: Tick](#)

[Information & Prevention](#)

[CDC: Ticks](#)



TEST YOUR MASTER GARDENER SKILLS

Answer: The yellow spots are Jumping Oak Galls!

Insect activity creates galls. For these particular galls, a tiny wasp created them. Usually these galls are harmless to the tree therefore no treatment is needed. For general information on different types of galls, click on the Penn State link. For information on Jumping Oak Galls go to the Missouri Botanical Garden link.

[Penn State Extension: Galls on Oaks](#)

[Missouri Botanical Garden: Jumping Oak Galls](#)

THANK YOU FOR READING!



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