

# CHRIS' CORNER



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## **Aphids: Beware of those Sapsuckers!**

We have now moved into the month of April which means spring is here and it is time to start planting. It seems as if spring has been here for a couple of months! To put it plainly, it has been a mild winter. The calls have started coming into the office about small green bugs that are present on young tender growth, for along with spring comes Aphids.

Aphids are soft-bodied insects that have piercing, sucking-mouthparts that are used to remove plant sap from leaves and stems. They are usually found on the undersides of tender growth. Leaves which are heavily infested can wilt or even turn yellow because of excessive plant sap removal. Although they may affect their appearance, plants are able to withstand excessive feeding from aphids.

Aphids produce "honeydew" which is sugary liquid waste. This honeydew supports the growth of a fungus called black sooty mold that accumulates on leaves and branches, turning them black. Honeydew attracts ants that like to feed on the sticky deposits.

An astonishing fact about aphids is that they mature in 7 to 10 days and have the ability to produce live young. The live young are usually females which can produce 40 to 60 offspring. This can result in a population explosion of aphids in a few weeks.

Scouting is the key to detecting and reducing aphid infestations. Low impact methods are the best way to control aphids. Insecticidal soaps work well against aphids. They require direct contact with the insects. Horticultural oils are also good to use against aphids. They kill by suffocating the insects. Please read and follow the label when using these products. Good coverage is very important. One easy and effective solution just using a strong spray of water to remove the aphids from their food source.

Lady beetles and lacewings are beneficial insects, which will eat large numbers of aphids. If you see these natural enemies of aphids on your plants, let them do the job for you. Well, I better start checking my clematis leaves for aphids. Those leaves were absolutely covered with aphids last year around this time.

Until next time, happy gardening!



*Christopher Coppen*

