

## APHIDS AND LEAFHOPPERS

by Stanley Rachesky  
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Two tiny plant sucking insects that will be here or are here in abundance already are aphids and leafhoppers.

**Aphids**, sometimes called plant lice, may be green, black, brown, red, pink, or some other color. They are ungainly, awkward, usually slow-moving insects with somewhat pear-shaped bodies ranging from 1/6 to 1/8 inch long. There may be various sizes of wingless aphids in a dense colony along a stem or on the underside of a leaf. Some may have relatively large, transparent wings. The slender antennae are conspicuous, and near the rear end of the abdomen there are two tubes called cornicles.

Aphids are sucking insects that feed by thrusting a long beak into the plant tissue. They withdraw great quantities of sap, some of which they excrete as honeydew. The honeydew makes the plant sticky. When trees are heavily infested with aphids, sidewalks and automobiles may become wet with honeydew. A sooty mold often grows in the honeydew to blacken stems and foliage. This fungus is not parasitic to the plant.

Leaves of plants may be distorted by aphids feeding on the undersides. Succulent stems may wilt or growth may be arrested by colonies of aphids. On the other hand, damage caused by aphids feeding on the bark of trees or woody shrubs cannot be readily seen.

The life history of aphids is somewhat complicated and varies with the species. One of the less complicated life histories proceeds as follows: Overwintering eggs on branches and stems hatch in the spring to produce a wingless form known as the stem mother. The unfertilized stem mother gives birth to living young in great numbers. Several generations may occur in this fashion, but in due time some individuals will develop wings and migrate to another host. Here they may deposit eggs for the winter or, after a few generations, migrate back to the original host to lay eggs.

Leafhopper damage is a little different, however, the end result is the same. Leafhopper damage can readily be seen by observing the mottled and speckled foliage. The leafhopper, like the aphids, sucks out the plant juices which creates the speckled leaf. New growth appearing on the plant is usually very severely damaged. By shaking small branches of a shrub the movement of the leafhopper can easily be seen.

Adult leafhoppers are about 1/8 inch long and are wedge or tubular shaped. They usually feed on the undersides of the leaves.

For control of aphids and leafhoppers spray infested plants thoroughly. Use malathion (55-57% emulsifiable concentrate), 2 teaspoons per gallon of water or 1 quart per 100 gallons. Repeat the treatment as needed.

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