

Eriophyid Mites of Conifers



A Pest That Damages Pine, Spruce, and Other Conifers

A large category of mites are known as eriophyids. This group of mites is most well-known for causing galls and deformations of plant tissue on deciduous trees and shrubs. (See fact sheet on Gall Forming Mites and Insects). Some eriophyid mites attack conifer species, and are known as rust mites for the type of damage they cause to needles. Eriophyid mites suck sap out of needles, leaving them discolored, distorted or dull-looking.

Infested Trees Require Treated For Control

Heavy outbreaks of eriophyid mites can seriously damage the appearance and the health of pines, spruces, and other trees. Soil applied treatments used against spider mites, more commonly found on conifers, will not be effective against eriophyid mites. Treatment options to control eriophyid mites include spraying the tree with a miticide or a trunk injection.



Mites on pine needle.

Photo Courtesy of: Howard Russell, MSU Diagnostic Services

What To Look For

- Eriophyid mites are extremely small (less than 0.5 mm in length). Even under magnification they can be difficult to detect.
- Yellowing, bronzing needles may indicate an infestation of eriophyid mites.
- Needles may also curl in response to damage.
- Similar symptoms can occur from winter injury, nutrient deficiency, or damage from salt or herbicides.

Life Cycle

- Each species of eriophyid mite is specialized to attack only one type of host.
- The life cycle of all eriophyid mite species follows the same general pattern.
- Adult females overwinter in bark crevices or on twigs.
- Females lay eggs in the spring.
- The young that hatch from the eggs resemble the adult.
- Numerous generations are produced each year.
- They are primarily spread by wind.

Treatment and Prevention

Use good cultural practices to support the health of trees and shrubs. Proper watering and fertilization ensure that trees will be less attractive to pests and will help in recovering from infestation. Ask your Consulting Arborist for further information on managing the health of your trees.

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