



MASTER GARDENER

COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION

Year Round Gardening

What's Bugging My Plant?

By Joan Nusbaum, Colorado Master Gardener

Is your plant showing signs of leaf-curl? What about leaves that are shiny and sticky? This may be the work of aphids. Aphids are found on almost all types of plants and may cause plant injury in a few cases.

With over 350 different aphid species occurring in Colorado, most feed on only a few species of plants. While plants are rarely injured, curling leaves or distortions of other kinds may be a clue that you have an aphid problem. In some cases, a worst problem is finding your car covered in sticky honeydew which is the waste material excreted by aphids and other phloem-sucking insects.

Sometimes you'll notice hundreds of lady beetles before you notice any aphids. This is because the lady beetle is the natural predator of the aphid, with the lady beetle larvae being particularly voracious predators of aphids. Other common predators include the larvae of green lacewings and flower (syrphid) flies.

Aphids can be found on leaves, stems and branches of plants. The oval body has a pair of "tail pipes" protruding from their behind (cornicles). A piercing-sucking mouthpart (stylet) allows the aphid to suck the sap from plants. They are very small ranging from 1.5-5.0mm and can be very pale yellow to nearly black. Most have shades of green or orange and a few are even bright red.



Once you begin to see aphids, you might be surprised on how fast they multiply. Essentially all aphids are females. Males, if they do appear, are present only in late summer or early autumn, during the last outdoor generation. Aphids basically give birth to pregnant daughters. The newly born aphid matures in 10-14 days. Adult aphids can

produce three to five young per day over the course of their lifetime which may extend about a month, unless shortened by natural enemy activities.

Other than the natural enemies, a forceful jet of water will lethally injure aphids and very few will find their way back to the plant once they fall to the ground. It's good to be able to recognize the lady beetle larvae since it will be your friend in the case of aphid infestation. It is typically black with orange spots and six legs. It is often mistaken for a bad bug because of its ominous looks, similar in shape to an alligator.

For additional information about Aphids on Shade Trees and Ornamentals, go to: <https://extension.colostate.edu/topic-areas/insects/aphids-on-shade-trees-and-ornamentals-5-511/>.

When you have questions, Colorado State University Extension has research-based answers. The Help Desk opened April 15 at 17 N. Spruce St. Hours are 9 a.m. to noon and 1 to 4 p.m. Mondays and Wednesdays. Call 520-7684 or email CSUmq2@elpasoco.com.