

## Consider your options for twospotted spider mites



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**T**wospotted spider mites have voracious appetites. But what makes these tiny pests' feeding habits such a problem?

The trouble lies in how they feed and the extensive damage they do. While living mostly on the undersides of leaves, spider mites feed by sticking their pointed mouth parts into plant cells, then sucking out the contents. They feed on cells that contain chlorophyll. When the chlorophyll content is reduced, plants can't photosynthesize as well. Removal of this chlorophyll gives the tops of the leaves white speckles and discoloration. As feeding continues, leaves can turn yellow or bronzed or they may drop completely from plants.

### Organic control

Organic controls for them can be broken into two categories: spray pesticides and bio-



*Neoseiulus californicus*, known as "Cali" for short, feeds on a twospotted spider mite.

logical controls. Several miticide sprays are approved for use on organics crops. These products' packaging will often include the "OMRI listed" (Organic Materials Review Institute) logo. Some of the products you're likely already using carry this logo — Triact 70, M-Pede, Organicide and JMS Stylet-Oil (there are both conventional and organic-approved versions of this product).

Others you might not have heard of include GC-Mite, Hexacide and PyGanic EC.

As with any pesticide, you should always read the label and make sure it is registered for use with your application. Keep in mind that

### Spider mite quiz

1. What's the approximate time needed for spider mite eggs to hatch?
2. Under optimum conditions (about 80°F), what's the fastest a spider mite can complete its life cycle?
3. How long do adult females live?
4. How many eggs can an adult female lay in her life?
5. How do you tell males from females?
6. What's the ratio of female to male twospotted spider mites?

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Photos by Suzanne Wainwright-Evans



Twospotted spider mites have distinctive spots and round eggs.