

Whiteflies  
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Whiteflies are not flies, but instead are related to aphids, mealybugs, and scales. The name whitefly comes from the white wax that covers their bodies and wings. Adults resemble tiny moths (1/16 to 1/10 of an inch). They can produce many eggs within a short amount of time, particularly when conditions are favorable. Once a colony has developed, it can be difficult to manage.

Whiteflies usually lay their eggs on the undersides of leaves. Once the eggs hatch, the tiny insects increase in size until the emergence of the winged adults. They use their piercing, needlelike mouthparts to suck sap from leaves and stems, excreting a sugary liquid honeydew as they feed. Honeydew encourages the growth of black sooty mold and attracts ants that eat it. Sap-sucking weakens plant vigor, results in leaf drop, and as whiteflies move from one plant to another, they transmit viruses and spread disease.

Outbreaks often occur when no natural enemies are present to control their population. Avoid using pesticides, which can kill off the lacewings, ladybeetles, and mini wasps that control whiteflies. Keep plants free of dust. Regularly check for and remove ants, which protect whiteflies. Avoid purchasing plants that tend to host whiteflies and use plants that repel whiteflies, such as nasturtium, marigold, and basil, around your vegetables. Avoid using high-nitrogen fertilizers, which can overstimulate plant growth and cause rapid insect reproduction; choose slow-release or organic fertilizers instead. Avoid excessive pruning, which can stimulate growth that attracts whiteflies. Allow sufficient water, air, and light to reach your plants so they remain healthy and strong.

Check your garden regularly. Signs of whitefly infestation can include tiny eggs and nymphs on the undersides of leaves; sticky honeydew on leaves, fruit, and beneath plants; the presence of black, sooty mold; yellowing, silvering, or drying of leaves; and deposits of white wax. Use hand removal and sticky traps to reduce whiteflies. Inspect new plants for whiteflies before bringing them into your garden, and hose whiteflies off plants with a strong stream of water.

Systemic insecticides are not recommended because they destroy beneficial insects and vital pollinators (such as bees and butterflies), kill the whiteflies' natural enemies, pollute our waterways, and cause outbreaks of spider mites and other destructive pests. Whiteflies can quickly build up a resistance to pesticides. Insecticidal soaps or oils might reduce the whitefly population but will not eliminate it entirely. They control only the whiteflies that are sprayed directly, so all infested plants must be sprayed thoroughly and repeatedly. Coat the undersides of all leaves. Read all product labels carefully and follow instructions for proper use, storage, and disposal. It is always best to use non-chemical alternatives or less-toxic pesticide products whenever possible.

You will find additional information on whiteflies identification, damage, management, etc., at <http://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7401.html> or UC ANR publication 3332, “Pests of the Garden and Small Farm: A Grower’s Guide to Using Less Pesticide,” 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 2018 by M. L. Flint, and for Sooty Mold <http://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn74108.html>.

Master Gardener classes are offered monthly throughout the county. You can find our class schedule at: [http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu/Public\\_Education\\_Classes/?calendar=yes&g=56698](http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu/Public_Education_Classes/?calendar=yes&g=56698), and recorded classes on many gardening topics here: [http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu/Public\\_Education/Classes/](http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu/Public_Education/Classes/).

The Sherwood Demonstration Garden is open on the first and second Saturday’s of the month from 9 a.m. -noon until March when we will offer expanded hours. Please check our website for more details [https://ucanr.edu/sites/EDC\\_Master\\_Gardeners/Demonstration\\_Garden/](https://ucanr.edu/sites/EDC_Master_Gardeners/Demonstration_Garden/)

Mark your calendar for our annual plant sales in April! Edible plant sale; including fruit, veggies and herbs will be on Saturday, April 16, 2022 8:00AM · 2:00PM. Choose your favorite edibles and shop our incredible tomato selection grown cared for locally by Master Gardener volunteers! The ornamental plant sale will take place on Saturday, April 30, 2022 8:00AM · 2:00PM. We will have a huge selection of trees, shrubs, grasses, succulents, native and perennial plants. Location: Sherwood Demonstration Garden 6699 Campus Drive, Placerville. <http://ucanr.edu/edcsale>

Have a gardening question? Master Gardeners are working hard to answer your questions. Leave a message on our office telephone: 530-621-5512, or use the “Ask a Master Gardener” option on our website: [mgeldorado.ucanr.edu](http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu). We’ll get back to you! Master Gardeners are also on Facebook, Instagram, and Pinterest.

For more information on the UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County, see our website at <http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu>. To sign up for notices and newsletters, see [http://ucanr.edu/master\\_gardener\\_e-news](http://ucanr.edu/master_gardener_e-news).