



DAYLILY PESTS

The Hemerocallis genus has 12 different species and thousands of cultivars. With hundreds of color combinations and leaf patterns that can be single, doubled or even triple-flowered, the daylily is a versatile perennial that thrives in U.S. Department of Agriculture plant hardiness zones 4 to 10. While it is relatively low maintenance and has very few pests and diseases, you'll have to watch out for a few critters. Four are most likely to cause noticeable damage: aphids, spider mites, thrips and mollusks.

Aphids

Aphids are small soft-bodied creatures that vary in appearance, but a specific aphid attacks only daylilies. This tiny creature is only one-tenth of an inch long and is very light green in color. They leave behind some traces you may notice before you see the actual aphids. Honeydew, a shiny sticky substance, can be seen on the leaves; and small white specs, which are the cast-off bodies from molting, may be noticed on or around the plant. Aphids enjoy cool weather and generally attack in the spring and fall. The safest way to treat for them is to spray an insecticide soap on both sides of the leaves and attempt to hit the aphids directly. The soap only kills the pests it touches, so repeat treatments may be necessary. As with any pest, using a harsh insecticide will kill the aphids' natural enemies, which is counterproductive to eliminating the infestation.

Spider Mites

Spider mites are not insects, but instead have eight legs and belong in the arachnid family. They are extremely small and usually aren't even noticed until damage is severe. The first signs are speckled leaves, caused by the spider mite sucking cell contents from the leaves. Also known as webspinning mites, they leave behind a white pocket of webbing on the plant. They are most often seen in hot, dry weather, and water stressed plants are more likely to have an infestation. Prevent spider mites by keeping your plants well watered during arid seasons. Special treatments are not necessary to rid this infestation; simply hose off the plant and wash away the tiny mites.

Thrips

Thrips are small, long-bodied winged insects that enjoy being in tight and confined places. They work into bloom buds or gather in curled leaves. Once in a comfortable area, they puncture the host and suck out the cell contents. Insecticidal soaps are an option for eliminating these pests, although narrow range oils may also work. Repeat the treatment as necessary, being sure not to hurt any natural predators.

Slugs and Snails

Slugs and snails, slimy members of the mollosk phylum, feed on young, tender leaves.

They are generally not seen because they hide in cool wet places during warm sunny hours and do their damage at night. They leave behind evidence in the form of slime trails and small uneven holes on the leaves. The best prevention is to eliminate hiding spaces, and clean up dead and damp foliage around the daylilies. If the pests are already creating problems, you can trap them by purposely creating a hiding spot, such as a wooden block, and allowing them to attach at night. Then, simply scrape the slugs and snails off. Baiting is also an option. Metaldehyde is the most common, although it is toxic to pets and children. Iron phosphate baits are a safer non-toxic option. Place the bait in the same location a few times in a row since snails and slugs are known to repeatedly visit the same food source.

Other Pests

Other pests also can attack daylilies, although they are not as common and don't cause as much noticeable damage. Insects such as cutworms, cucumber beetles, wasps, earwigs, tarnished plant bugs, Japanese beetles, cicadas, bulb mites and grasshoppers are among the dozens that can potentially be a nuisance. Mammals, such as deer, can also nibble flower buds and leave your daylilies barren.