

Farmer Fact Sheet 38: Aphids



What are they?

Aphids are often called Green fly. They have needle-like mouthparts and suck the juices from leaves and stems. Many kinds of aphids occur on many different plants; here is the Cotton or Melon aphid, also common on taro and cucumbers. Adults give birth to 4-6 live young a day.

What damage do they do?

Aphids cause several problems: a) feeding damage – new leaves are small and twisted, or they wilt, dry up and die early; b) leaves turn black, covered by sooty mould fungi growing on ‘honeydew’, the waste juices from aphids; c) spread diseases caused by viruses.

How do I identify them?

Look for groups of green insects on the underside of young leaves, on shoots and buds. They are about 1 mm long, bright green to nearly black, with two tubes at the rear. Some have wings, up to 2 mm. Look for ants; they come for the honeydew.

How do I manage aphids?

Many insects feed on aphids, such as ladybeetles and lacewings. Tiny wasps lay their eggs in the aphids. Ants protect the aphids from natural enemies.

Cultural control:

- Remove weeds from within and around the crop; aphids breeds on many kinds of weeds;
- Burn or bury the remains of crops after harvest;
- DO NOT plant down-wind from crops with aphids;
- Mulch the crop; this makes it more difficult for the aphids to find the crop plants.

Chemical control:

- If insecticides are necessary, use soap sprays; or use synthetic pyrethroids (for example, lambda cyhalothrin). READ INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE USE.