

Orchid Pests Part 1

There are several pests that can affect your orchids' growth. Identifying the particular pest on your orchid is necessary to controlling it properly.

This chart shows some of the pests most often observed on orchids. Read below for more information about each pest and how to eliminate them.

Scale

Scale are piercing, sucking insects that are difficult to control as the reproducing females are covered by a protective shell which also protects her eggs. Usually, only the mature insects are easily seen with the naked eye. Depending on the type of scale, adults are small and round and can appear at the base of or under leaves and/or on pseudobulbs, flowers, rhizomes or even roots in severe cases. Heavy infestation can cause plant decline and eventually kill the plant if not dealt with properly.

To remove scale, use a small toothbrush or cotton swab soaked in rubbing alcohol (known as isopropyl alcohol) to remove the pests. Do not use other forms of alcohol. Be sure to check and treat all affected areas of the plant – especially in the tight areas around the base of leaves. Check the plant again in a week for the presence of more pests as a follow-up treatment is often needed to fully rid the orchid of pests. For heavy infestations, a good systemic insecticide will be necessary. Always follow label directions when applying pesticides.

Aphids

Aphids are small, soft-bodied insects that are generally pear-shaped and green or black in color. They reproduce rapidly and are most often seen on flower buds/spikes and new growth. They produce honeydew which can encourage the growth of a black fungus known as sooty mold which is often a telltale sign of aphid infestation.

To remove aphids, use a small toothbrush or cotton swab soaked in rubbing alcohol (known as isopropyl alcohol) to remove the pests. Do not use other forms of alcohol. Be sure to check and treat all affected areas of the plant – especially in the tight areas around the base of leaves. Check the plant again in a week for the presence of more pests as a follow-up treatment is often needed to fully rid the orchid of pests. For heavy infestations, a good systemic insecticide will be necessary. Always follow label directions when applying pesticides.

Mealybugs

Sometimes confused with scale, mealybugs are a soft-bodied insect that are readily identified at the mature stage as white to greyish-white and cotton-like. They are often found in the same areas as scale and can do substantial damage if not dealt with immediately.

To remove mealybugs, use a small toothbrush or cotton swab soaked in rubbing alcohol (known as isopropyl alcohol) to remove the pests. Do not use other forms of alcohol. Be sure to check and treat all affected areas of the plant – especially in the tight areas around the base of leaves. Check the plant again in a week for the presence of more pests as a follow-up treatment is often needed to fully rid the orchid of pests. For heavy infestations, a good systemic insecticide will be necessary. Always follow label directions when applying pesticides.

