

## Orchid Pests Part 2

### Thrips

These are very small, elongated insects that are most prevalent on flowers and buds. Often, their presence is not recognized until the damage from their feeding is obvious. Their sucking of plant juices can cause deforming of buds, flowers, and new growth as well as browning on the margins of flowers. They can also cause pre-mature browning of buds and flower spikes. If damage by thrips is suspected, place a white sheet of paper under a flower or opening bud and tap on the bud/flower several times. If small yellow or black dots are seen moving around on the paper, thrips are present.

To get rid of thrips, purchase a pesticide. However, the plant should be inspected again every week and the procedure repeated until no infestation is visible. Two repeat applications at weekly intervals are necessary to control successive generations.

### Mites

Mites are microscopic, and their presence is often not known until the damage is very evident. They often attack the undersides of leaves leaving areas that look silvery and pitted.

The most common mite affecting orchids is the red spider mite. Webbing on leaves with very tiny red specs moving about on the webbing is a sign of a heavy red spider mite infestation.

To get rid of mites, it is important to note that mites are not insects! So, most insecticides are not effective against mites. You must purchase a pesticide that is specifically labeled as a miticide for use against this pest. For small infestations in the home, wiping the infested areas with a cotton ball dipped in rubbing alcohol can be effective. However, the plant should be inspected again every week and the procedure repeated until no infestation is visible. If using a pesticide, two repeat applications at weekly intervals are necessary.

### Grasshoppers

Grasshoppers, especially Lubbers, can do significant damage to your orchid in a very short period of time. Lubbers are usually 1" to 3" long and can vary in color from yellow to black depending on the Lubber species and stage of growth.

These are best controlled immediately by hand, pruners or shoe/boot.

### In Conclusion

The most effective control of insects is prevention. New plants should be isolated from other plants for the first couple of weeks and monitored closely for the presence of any insects. Only after you are comfortable that they are insect-free should you place them by other plants. Likewise, any infested plants found should be immediately removed from other plants and treated appropriately.

With proper care, many orchid pests can be avoided.

- Keep your growing area clean
- Water only as needed (& as early in the day as possible)
- Feed regularly at recommended rates
- Space your plants well to make sure they have adequate air circulation
- Use clean and sterilized tools when handling your plants

