Insect Pests of Ornamental Plants
Aphids
Aphids

- Sucking Mouthparts
- Rob plants of their nutrients
- Some species transmit viruses.
Aphids

- An aphid is a soft-bodied insect that is 1/16 to 1/8 inch in size and is shaped like a pear.

- Come in many colors - yellow, green, blueish-green, reddish brown and nearly black.

- Aphids have a very high reproductive capacity. Each female is able to produce 50-100 offspring.

- As many as 50 generations can occur in a single year.
Damage Caused by Aphids

- Aphids attack a great variety of plants.
- Their feeding causes the leaves to curl, cup or distort.
- Aphids secrete a sweet colorless liquid called honeydew.
- The honeydew attracts ants and flies that feed on the honeydew.
- A sooty mold will often grow on this honeydew. This sooty mold blocks light from reaching the leaf and thus, inhibits photosynthesis.
Scales
Scales

- Scales have sucking mouthparts.
- They suck the sap of both ornamental plants and turfgrass.
- Scale insects are small and covered with either wax or a shell/small armored plate.
Damage Caused by Scales

- Large populations of scale can result in stunted plant growth, yellow blotches on leaves and cause some or all of the leaves to drop.

- Many scale species secrete honeydew and in turn, this can lead to sooty mold and a reduction of photosynthesis.
Mealybugs
Mealybugs

- Mealybugs are a particular kind of scale insect and its name comes from the waxy secretions that covers the insect’s body.

- At maturity, this insect reaches 1/4 inch in size.

- They feed on the stems and leaves of plants.
Damage Caused by Mealybugs

- Like aphids, mealybugs secrete honeydew that sooty mold likes to grow on.
Whiteflies
Whiteflies

- Whiteflies resemble miniature white moths.
- They are white, have four wings and prefer to reside on the underside of leaves.
- Both the nymph and adult stage of this insect cause injury.
Whiteflies

- Plants fed on by whiteflies will sometimes wilt and affected tissue sometimes yellows and then dies.
- Whitefly eggs are attached by adults to the underside of plant leaves.
- Gardenias, privet, hibiscus and greenhouse plants are commonly infested with whiteflies.
Damage Caused by Whiteflies

- Foliage that is heavily infested with whiteflies will be yellow on its upper surface.
- With some plants, the leaf margins have a discolored appearance.
- This insect secretes honeydew which sooty mold likes to grow on.
Lacebugs

- Lacebugs are 1/8 to 1/4 inch long and have a flattened rectangular shape.
- The name of this insect comes from its lace-like appearance.
Damage Caused by Lacebugs

- Lacebugs damage plants by sucking sap from the underside of leaves.
- Species of plants commonly damaged by lacebugs include azalea, lantana, mountain laurel, pyracantha, rhododendron and sycamore.
Thrips
Thrips

- Thrips have piercing-sucking mouthparts.
- They are 1/40 - 1/10 inch in size.
- They are slender bodied insects that vary in color from yellow to nearly black.
Damage Caused by Thrips

- Thrips commonly attack the slender growing tissues of plants.
- Their feeding action can cause leaves to wither, curl up and die.
- Injured flowers may appear deformed in appearance.
Spider mite
Spider Mites

- Spider mites belong to the order Acarina along with spiders and ticks. They are not insects.
- Common and persistent on ornamental plants
- Usually less than 1/50 inch in length
- The adult stage of this insect has 8 legs but the nymphs only have 6 legs.
Damage Caused by Spider Mites

- Spider mites rasp the surface of a plant and drink the fluid that flows out. This causes browning of the foliage.

- Plants that are heavily infested with spider plants soon die.

- Parts of the plant infested with spider mites are typically covered in a characteristic fine web.
Cabbage Looper
Loopers

- The cabbage looper is the most common member of this group.
- The mature larvae of cabbage loopers are light green and about 2 inches long.
- Cabbage loopers have 3 pairs of legs behind the head and pairs of false legs on the 3rd, 4th and 6th abdominal segments behind the last pair of true legs.
Looper

Looper appear to be measuring the distance as they crawl.

- The eggs of the cabbage looper hatch in about 3 days and the larvae feed about 3 weeks before spinning a cocoon in which they pupate.

- About 35 days are needed for the cabbage looper to go from egg to adult and 4 or more generations can occur in a single year.
Damage Caused by Cabbage Loopers

- Cabbage Loopers damage plants by chewing on the foliage.
Cankerworms
Cankerworms

- Cankerworms have chewing mouthparts.
- Larvae grow to about 1 inch in size and vary in color.
- They are usually striped with longitudinal lines that are predominantly green, brown and pale yellow in color.
Spring and Fall Cankerworms are very destructive pests.

- They like to feed on the underside of leaves leaving large holes and dark pellets of excrement.

- Large, healthy plants can tolerate some defoliation before insecticide use is justified.
Walnut Caterpillar
Walnut Caterpillar

- Has chewing mouthparts
- During some years, this is a problem pest for pecan farmers and homeowners.
- This insect likes to deposit its eggs in masses of three hundred on the underside of pecan leaves.
Damage Caused by Walnut Caterpillars

- Larvae that are newly hatched form a web and feed on the leaves of pecan trees.
- Heavily infested trees can be completely stripped of their foliage.
Bagworm
Bagworm

- This insect is commonly identified by its spindle-shaped bag that is coated with bits of leaves and needles.
- The adult stage of the male bagworm is a black hairy moth with a 1-inch wing span.
- The adult females are mahogany brown, wingless and worm-like in appearance. The female never emerges from the bag.
Damage Caused by Bagworms

- Heavy bagworm infestations can completely stir a plant of its foliage.

- They are commonly found on evergreens.

- Some bagworm species occasionally attack broadleaf plants and other ornamentals.
European Oak Leaf Roller
Leaf Rollers, Leaf Tiers and Leaf Crumplers

- These insects cause similar kinds of damage.
- The colors of these caterpillars varies from a pale yellow to a dark green.
- These caterpillars grow to about 3/4 inch in size.
Damage Caused by Leaf Rollers, Leaf Tiers and Leaf Crumplers

- These caterpillars like to roll or tie leaves together in a group which interferes with plant growth and mars the beauty of affected plants.
Eastern Tent Caterpillar
Tent Caterpillars

- Tent caterpillars feed on many different species of trees.
- A full-grown caterpillar larva is 1.5 inches long or longer.
Damage Caused by Tent Caterpillars

- The larvae (caterpillars) eat the foliage of infested plants and produce unsightly webs.
Fall Webworm
Fall Webworm

- Fall webworms are commonly found in the fall feeding on Pecan, persimmon, oak, hickory and other species of trees.
- This caterpillar will commonly grow to 1 inch in length and have a pale yellow to greenish body that is covered with tufts of long white and black hairs.
Damage Caused by Fall Webworm

- Fall Webworms construct webs on the terminal ends of branches and consume the foliage within these webs.
- As the larvae grow, they will expand these webs and encase more foliage.
Elm Leaf Beetle
Elm Leaf Beetles

- The adults of this insect are yellowish-olive green and commonly have a black stripe along the margin of each wing.
- This insect has black eyes and antennae and legs that are yellow.
Damage Caused by Elm Leaf Beetles

- The larvae and adults of elm leaf beetles feed on the leaves of elm trees and their feeding skeletonize the leaves.
- The adults chew oval holes through the leaves and the larvae eat all except the upper surface of the leaf.
Leaf Miners
Leaf Miners

- Leaf Miners refers to the immature stage of more than one species of insect.
- The eggs of leaf miner species are deposited in plant tissue and after hatching, begin feeding between the upper and lower surfaces of a leaf.
- Several generations usually occur within a growing season.
Damage Caused by Leaf Miners

- The tunneling activity of leaf miners damages the appearance of leaves.
- Zig-zag shaped lines where the leaf miners have been feeding are readily seen.
- Chrysanthemums, zinnias and verbenas are commonly attacked by leaf miner species.