



Pacific Pests, Pathogens & Weeds - Mini Fact Sheet Edition

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Spider mites (024)



Photo 1. Symptom of mite damage on taro. Note the damage is either side of the main veins.



Photo 3. Damage to leaves of cassava by *Tetranychus* mites. As with the symptom on taro (Photo 2) the damage is along the main vein.



Photo 5. Two-spotted mite, *Tetranychus* sp., with characteristic body patterns.



Photo 2. Mite infestations cause the leaves of taro to appear light green. Most damage is along the sides of the major veins; this can be seen from the upper surface, but most of the mites are on the under surface of the leaf.



Photo 4. Webbing made by a massive spider mite outbreak on sweetpotato growing in a screenhouse.



Photo 6. Undersurface of Hibiscus cabbage infested with *Tetranychus* mites.



Photo 7. Top surface of Photo 6 showing patches of damage caused by mites feeding beneath.



Photo 8. Spider mites on their webs over a sweet potato leaf.



Photo 9. Yellowing of leaves of *Amaranthus*, growing wild and heavily infested with spider mites.

Summary

- Worldwide distribution. In tropics and sub-tropics. On cassava, okra, papaya, sweetpotato, tomato, eggplant, beans, taro, *bele*, cucumber, squash, other cucurbits, and ornamentals
- Common on under surface of leaves of taro, eggplant, bele, cassava and many others, especially when dry.
- Mites have needle-like mouthparts and suck sap from leaves causing white speckling on top surfaces. Later, leaves turn yellow and die early. Webs occur.
- Mites spread in wind and on plant parts.
- Natural enemies: predatory mites, ladybird beetles, lacewing larvae, pirate bugs, big-eyed bugs and predatory thrips.
- Cultural control: preserve natural enemies by not using insecticides; spray underside of leaves with water; mulch plants to preserve water in droughts.
- Chemical control: soap, white or horticultural oils, wettable sulphur; abamectin; alternatively, difocol or synthetic pyrethroids, but they will kill natural enemies.

Common Name

Spider mites

Scientific Name

Tetranychus species. The different species are difficult to tell apart; they need to be examined using a high power microscope. The two-spotted mite (*Tetranychus urticae*), also known as the red spider mite, is common in Pacific island countries, infesting over 200 species of plants. This fact sheet mostly concerns this species.

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Photo 5 Mites field crops. DAF, Queensland government.

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