

Pacific Pests, Pathogens and Weeds - Online edition

Spider mites (024)

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.



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



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 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 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.

Copyright © 2021. All rights reserved.



Australian Government
Australian Centre for
International Agricultural Research



Web edition hosted at <https://apps.lucidcentral.org/pppw>