

Spruce Spider Mite

Scientific Name: *Oligonychus ununguis*

Hosts: Spruce, fir, pine, juniper, arborvitae, Douglas-fir, yew

Damage/symptoms: The spider mite is a sap-sucking arthropod, and its feeding results in flecking and greyish spots. Mites usually attack the older needles in the lower portions of the tree. With heavier infestations, needles will prematurely drop, and stunting of the needles can occur. Silk can also be evident on the needles.

Life cycle: Eggs hatch in the spring, and they develop into adults in about a month. The mites are dormant in the warmer months and are more of a cool-season pest. There are typically two generations per year.



Figure 1. Spruce spider mite infestation on the needles.

Management: Spider mites respond to stressed trees. If practical, increase the humidity on the trees by jetting them with water on a regular basis. Mites have several natural enemies, such as predatory mites, plant bugs, and spiders to help control them. Insecticides are often ineffective with mite control because the mites have developed resistance, and the insecticides can kill their beneficial natural enemies. Miticides or horticultural oils can be used to effectively control the mites with minimal harm to predators. The best time to treat spruce spider mite infestations is in early spring (April to May) and again in early September (second generation).

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Disclaimer: These recommendations are provided only as a guide. It is always the pesticide applicator's responsibility, by law, to read and follow all current label directions for the specific pesticide being used. If any information in these recommendations disagrees with the label, the recommendation must be disregarded. The authors and Montana State University assume no liability resulting from the use of these recommendations.