

Control plant pest by washing

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bought and have lost four plants so far. They are about 1 mm long; the young are green and cigar shaped and the adults dark colored and very active. They can fly but prefer to hop and move about by hitching a ride on your clothes.

Since thrips burrow into the leaves, they can be difficult to eradicate. First signs of an infestation are dark fecal specks found on the leaves, white indented spots in the leaves where they have rasped away the leaf tissue and tracks where they have burrowed into the leaf. Iviess, lipstick vines, african violets (burrow into the leaf stem near the base), fatsias and other broad leaf plants are susceptible.

Infested plants should be washed off and then sprayed every 3 - 4 days with a soap and alcohol solution for two weeks then weekly for another two weeks.

Most insect pests can be controlled by washing the plant off first and then spraying every 3 - 4 days for two weeks with a soap and alcohol solution. The plants should be inspected whenever they are watered and dead leaves always cleaned away. A severely infected plant should be thrown out unless you are particularly attached to it or it is very expensive to replace.

A homemade brew can be concocted by mixing a tablespoon of liquid dish detergent like Ivory and a tablespoon of isopropyl alcohol (available at the drug-store) in a litre of water. Alternatively, you can add the alcohol to a commercial product like Safer's Insecticidal soap.

The alcohol penetrates the insect's body, carrying the soap with it, and increases the effectiveness of the treatment. Steeping a garlic clove in the water before mixing also seems to increase the effectiveness of the soap solution. With some attention now, you can prevent a serious insect problem without resorting to chemical pesticides in the house and have happy, healthy houseplants.

Grace Lockwood is a Georgetown resident who has been an avid gardener for as long as she can remember. She has both vegetable and flower gardens but has a soft spot for roses — especially modern hybrid tea roses and antique roses. Grace is a hydrogeologist by training and is currently taking correspondence courses for landscape design from the University of Guelph.

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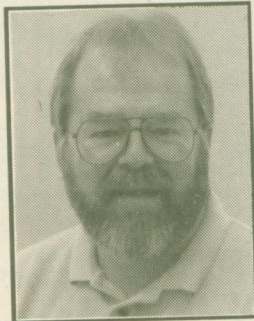


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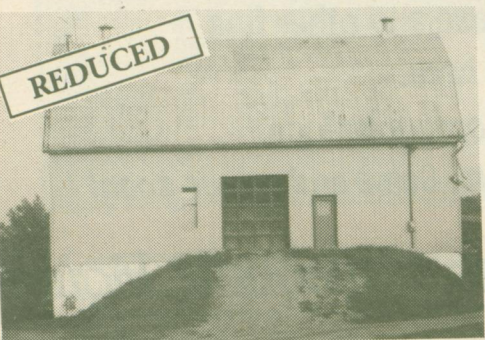
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