

# ORNAMENTALS

• H O T L I N E •

## INSECTS

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Brian Kunkel  
Ornamental IPM Specialist

SPRING temperatures are still really cool; therefore, I'll present some information on a common pest in greenhouses - WESTERN FLOWER THRIPS. This is Delaware's most common thrips species and they feed on many different species.

Adult thrips are small (1 - 2 mm) and may be yellowish, brown or black depending on the species. Adults have two pairs of wings fringed with fine hairs, held parallel along their back when at rest. Thrips feed by piercing the plant with rasping/sucking mouthparts that suck out plant cell contents. Feeding damage may deform flowers, leaves or shoots. Silvery streaking and flecking occurs on foliage from feeding. Immatures and adults frequently feed in tight, hidden locations or in flowers. Immature stages of thrips may be white, yellow or brown and do not have wings. Thrips development is related to temperatures and humidity. Western flower thrips feed on developing flowers prior to opening, which may cause flower buds to abort or cause flower deformation. This thrips vectors the impatiens necrotic spot virus (INSV) and tomato spotted wilt virus (TSWV) tospoviruses - two of the most destructive viruses found in herbaceous annuals and perennials. There are no cures for tospoviruses and infected plants must be destroyed.

Blue sticky cards are more attractive to western flower thrips than yellow, but both will capture thrips (all species). Check sticky cards and replace weekly to keep abreast of thrips infestations. You can also search for thrips by tapping flowers on a white sheet of paper to dislodge the insects for counting. 'Purple Flash' ornamental pepper is grown in greenhouses, often in hanging baskets, as a banker plant for minute pirate bugs. The pepper produces pollen for minute pirate bugs to eat when thrips populations are low. Other biological control options include: predatory mites (*Hypoaspis miles*, *Amblyseius cucumeris*, *A. swirskii* and *A. degenerans*), lacewings, entomopathogenic nematodes (*Steinernema feltiae*) and entomopathogenic fungi

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## DISEASES

Nancy Gregory  
Plant Diagnostician

CLEANING TOOLS in the spring is good sanitation, along with cleaning potting surfaces and pots. Use new potting soil if possible. Used soil may be composted if no soil-borne pathogens were present, but it is better to start new containers using fresh potting mix. Potting mix is usually pasteurized, but not sterilized, as there are beneficial microbes in the soil microflora. Sanitation products are listed in the UD fact sheet: <http://extension.udel.edu/factsheets/sanitizing-products-greenhouse/>.

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Issue 2

## What's Hot!

Branches were bent and broken in the snow last week. Prune to remove, don't pull.

Visit these two blogs for up-to-date info: The Hot Topics in Plant Health blog by Nancy Gregory (<http://extension.udel.edu/ag/hot-topics-plant-disease/>) highlights new or seasonal plant health and pest topics. The Landscape and Horticulture blog of Sue Barton (<http://sites.udel.edu/suebarton/>) highlights educational programs and sustainable landscape resources.

This is the last issue we will mail to all 2017 subscribers. If you haven't resubscribed, please visit this URL

<http://www.udel.edu/ornamentals-hotline> and subscribe, so you don't get dropped from the list.



Western flower thrips. Photo credit: P. Kunkel and N. Gregory

For more information

on pests & practices covered in this newsletter, call your County Extension Office

Helpful numbers to know:



Garden Line (for home gardeners only)	831-8862
New Castle County Extension	831-2506
Kent County Extension	730-4000
Sussex County Extension	856-7303

View more pictures at <http://extension.udel.edu/ornamentals/>

UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE

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