

Insect Signs and Symptoms



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This brief diagnostic guide helps determine the pest or category of pest. This list is not all-inclusive, and your conclusions should be verified with text and photos from other sources.

Symptom or Sign	Pests often responsible	
I. Chewed foliage or blossoms	Sawfly larvae Beetle larvae or adults Caterpillars	Snails and slugs Tree crickets, grasshoppers, & walkingsticks
II. Bleached, bronzed, silvered, stippled (flecked), streaked or mined leaves	Leafhoppers Lace bugs Plant bugs Thrips	Aphids Psyllids Spider mites Leaf miners
III. Distortion (swelling, twisting, cupping) of plant parts	Thrips Aphids Eriophyid mites	Gall makers Psyllids
IV. Dieback of twigs, shoots or entire plant; stems, branches and exposed roots sometimes with holes in bark; wood dust, frass, gum or pitch may issue from holes	Wood borers Bark beetles Scale insects Cutworms Adelgids	Gall makers Root-feeding beetle larvae Nematodes Weevils
V. Presence of insect or insect-related products on plants:		
Honeydew	Aphids Soft scales Leafhoppers	Mealybugs Psyllids Whiteflies
Fecal specks on leaves	Lace bugs Greenhouse thrips Some leaf beetles	Some plant bugs Some sawfly adults
Tents, webs, silken mats	Tent caterpillars Leaf rollers or tiers	Webworms
Bags and cases	Bagworms	Case bearers
Spittle	Spittlebugs	
Cottony fibrous material	Adelgids Mealybugs Some aphids Some scales	Some whiteflies Some leafhoppers Flatids
Slime	Snails	Slugs
Pitch tubes	Some bark beetles	
Pitch or gum masses and sap flow	Larvae of certain moths Larvae of certain beetles	Larvae of certain midges

Based on: Johnson, Warren T. and Lyon, Howard H. (1991). *Insects that Feed on Trees and Shrubs*, 2nd Edition Revised. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY.