



LEAFHOPPERS

Host Plants and Description

There are more than 2,000 species of leafhoppers, and they may be present on almost any type of plant, including trees, shrubs, perennials and annuals. They are small, wedge-shaped yellowish or greenish insects; occasionally they are striped. They feed on the underside of leaves, and they will run, hop or fly if disturbed.

Plant Damage and Symptoms

Damaged leaves appear mottled or stippled, and the leaf margins may curl or brown. Plants may also be stunted, and if the infestation is severe enough, winter-hardiness may be reduced. Also, leafhoppers often spread disease (aster yellows, phloem necrosis of American elm).

Leafhoppers can be quite difficult to detect, as even in the young nymphal stages they are quite active, and they will walk sideways to the opposite side of the leaf when disturbed. Frequently, the discarded skins of the young insects on the leaf undersides are the only sign that leafhoppers are present.

The most serious type of leafhopper in Illinois is the potato leafhopper. These leafhoppers winter in the Gulf of Mexico and are blown back up to this area in the spring. They settle on alfalfa and other green crops, moving to deciduous trees just after the first alfalfa cutting.

Controls

In many cases, the damage is not serious and no control is recommended. For serious infestations, Carbaryl (Sevin) or acephate are the recommended chemical treatments, although control can be difficult. Apply these insecticides early, before the leaves start to curl. Imidicloprid is effective for trees. It is applied as a soil injection or soil drench.