



Magnolia Scale

What is Magnolia Scale?

Magnolia scales are small (1/4 – 1/2 inch diameter) insects and range from white to yellowish. Scale insects feed on plant sap. They are found on the stems and branches of the magnolia and produce large amounts of a shiny, sticky substance called honeydew. Black sooty mold then develops on the honeydew and covers the leaves and branches of the tree as well as anything underneath. As scales grow they are often covered with a white, mealy wax that is lost when the crawlers emerge in late September to early October.

How do I know if my Magnolia is infested?

You will see a ¼ - ½ inch white bumps on the stems and branches. The leaves may be sticky and there may also be a mess of black, sooty mold on the tree itself, as well as any plantings underneath. Starting in late September, you may notice small crawlers on the undersides of one to two year old branches. If you are unsure if your Magnolia is infested, please bring a small sample to the nursery to be inspected.

How do I control Magnolia Scale?

Scale will rarely kill your magnolia, but controlling the scale will promote healthy growth and keep your yard clean of sticky, black sooty mold. In the Spring at bud break (before the leaves start to emerge), spray your magnolia with Espoma Horticultural Oil. Make sure to cover tops and bottoms of stems and leaves. In late September to early October, spray again with Espoma Horticultural Oil or Insecticidal Soap. This will control the newly hatched crawlers. Remember that this is a contact spray so thorough coverage is necessary. If you notice scale on your magnolia between May and August, you need to wait until the crawlers are active in late September to early October before you can spray. If you spray before they are active, you are not controlling the scale. Hand picking the hard, white scale off the twigs and branches is effective, but very time consuming work.

