

Controlling Houseplant Pests

Prevention

- Examine new plants brought into the home and make sure they are free of pests.
- Isolate new plants for a month before placing them with your other plants.
- Use sterilized soil for potting to prevent soil pests (like springtails) from developing.

Syringing

- Apply a stream of tepid water with some force from a syringe or faucet to wash the pests off of plants.
- Be sure to get the undersides of the leaves.
- This will not kill the insects (although some may drown), but it will reduce the numbers and take time for the insect population to build back up on the plants.

Washing

- Wash with soapy water and a soft brush or cloth to help remove many insects from broad-leaved plants.
- Use about 2 teaspoons of a mild detergent to a gallon of water. Rinse with tepid clear water.

Handpicking

- Insects can be controlled by handpicking with a toothpick or tweezers.
- This is feasible when only one or two plants are involved, with a small insect population.

Dips

- Certain plants may be inverted and dunked upside down in water containing a mild detergent or one of the recommended insecticides.
- Cyclamen mites on African violets can be controlled by placing the pot in a water bath at 110° for 15 minutes.

Alcohol

- Individual insects may be removed with a cotton swab dipped in rubbing alcohol.

Sprays

- Spray the plants with one of the recommend insecticides according to the label directions.
- Hand atomizers, compressed air sprays and pressurized aerosols may be used.
- Be sure the insecticides will control the pests that are present and not cause damage to your particular plant species.

Eradication

- Sometimes it is best to discard heavily infested plants.

Soil Pests

- Fungus gnats and springtails many times can be controlled by not over-watering and letting the soil media dry out a little more.
- Use a soil drench or a soil surface spray if an insecticide is needed.

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