



Wave Petunia Pests

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Wave petunias are annuals commonly used in home-landscape settings. These flowers are low maintenance and available in a wide variety of colors -- including yellow, white, salmon, purple, pink, red, lavender and bi-color. Wave petunias are often infested with aphids, which damage petunias through feeding on foliage.

1. Identification

- Aphids are common petunia pests. These tiny insects measure 1/16 to 1/8 inches in length and are typically found on the undersides of plant leaves. Aphids are often red, yellow, pink or brown. Some aphids have wings, but all have slender antennae. Succulent new plant tissue is preferred by aphids. Aphids multiply rapidly, and infestations may become severe in a matter of days.

Effects

- Wave petunias infested with aphids may have distorted leaves, which is a result of aphid feeding. Aphids feed on plant leaves by placing piercing mouthparts in the leaf and extracting plant sap. After ingesting large amounts of plant sap, aphids produce a substance known as honeydew. This clear, gooey liquid sticks to petunia leaves and flowers, causing sooty mold fungi to grow there. Sooty mold quickly covers entire plants and is characterized by a black coating of crusty fungus.

Cultural Control

- Cultural control methods such as washing your petunias with a brisk stream of water may help reduce aphid populations. Water sprays knock aphids from petunia leaves and must be repeated two or three times weekly to be effective. Light infestations of aphids may be removed by placing a cotton swab or cotton ball soaked in alcohol on the insects. A variety of predatory insects such as aphid lions feed on aphids, keeping them under control. Avoid using insecticides if these beneficial insects are present. Since aphids are drawn to succulent new plant growth, avoid applying nitrogen-rich fertilizers to your petunias.

Chemical Control

- Horticultural oils and insecticidal soaps are available at your local [gardening](#) center and often control aphids without injuring your plants. Apply these products thoroughly, concentrating on the undersides of plant leaves where aphids often gather in colonies. Insecticidal sprays are also available for aphid control, but may kill beneficial insects and should only be applied if cultural control methods fail.