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insect answers



MAPLE BLADDER GALL MITE

Maple leaves often develop small growths or deformities called galls which are caused by microscopic mites known as maple bladder gall mites, *Vasates quadripedes*. They occur almost exclusively on silver or soft maple.

Description

Maple bladder gall mites are approximately $\frac{1}{125}$ inch in length and cannot be seen with the naked eye. They are white or pinkish and have two pairs of legs.

Mites overwinter as adult females on the bark of host trees. As spring approaches and new leaves develop, they move from the bark onto the leaves where they feed and lay eggs.

Damage

The mites feed on the undersurfaces of leaves. Their feeding activity causes a reaction in the plant tissues and results in plant production of galls on the upper surfaces of damaged leaves. The galls are globular and vary in size, the larger ones about $\frac{1}{10}$ inch in height. Galls are green when first forming, then turn red, and finally black as the season progresses.

As a gall becomes larger, a cavity forms inside it with an opening on the lower surface of the leaf. This serves as an entrance for gall mites. When the galls are fully formed, the mites feed largely inside the gall cavity.

Control

The presence of galls, even in considerable numbers,

does not usually harm trees. Rarely does a severe infestation cause serious damage. The problem is largely one of unsightliness. There are registered products available should the problem be severe enough to warrant control. They should be applied in spring before leaf buds open. The names of currently registered pesticides can be obtained from your local county Extension agent.



Bladder galls on maple leaf. (Photograph courtesy of Ohio Agricultural Experiment Station)

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