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**Abstract:** This publication focuses on integrated pest management for greenhouse whitefly on both vegetable and ornamental crops. It is designed to complement the ATTRA publication *Integrated Pest Management for Greenhouse Crops*, which discusses techniques for good greenhouse supervision. Monitoring of whiteflies, biological controls, biopesticides, and insect growth regulators are discussed below. The appendices include information on the newest biopesticides and biological control organisms.

By Lane Greer NCAT Agriculture Specialist June 2000

#### Introduction

Whiteflies began showing resistance to synthetic insecticides early on, and by the 1980s they were a very serious greenhouse pest. Not only do they feed on plants, but they also produce honeydew, which detracts from the plants' appearance and attracts other insects and sooty mold. Whiteflies can also transmit plant viruses. The mere presence of whiteflies in a greenhouse will stop customers from buying your product.

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*Courtesy of Hercules Incorporated Wilmington, Delaware* 

Several species of whiteflies attack greenhouse plants, and they typically have a wide host range and resist insecticides. Greenhouse tomatoes and poinsettias are especially plagued by whiteflies. The most common whiteflies on greenhouse crops are the greenhouse whitefly (*Trialeurodes vaporariorum*), sweetpotato whitefly (*Bemisia tabaci*) and the silverleaf whitefly (*Bemisia argentifolii*).

The various whitefly species and biotypes look very much alike, but they have subtle physiological differences. These differences can cause them to respond differently to control strategies. Because control measures must be selected according to the type of whitefly present, accurate identification is critical to successful control. The Cooperative Extension Service is an excellent resource for assistance with pest identification. There are also several web sites that provide pictures of the various whiteflies. See the **Web Sites** section for more information.

# **Crop Scouting and Trapping**

Plants should be visually inspected for signs of a whitefly infestation – e.g., off-color or stunted plants. A hand lens is useful for systematically inspecting a number of individual plants for the presence of eggs, nymphs or adults. Both the upper and lower leaf surfaces should be inspected. It is important to check the greenhouse in the same pattern on each scouting trip. Locations where whiteflies are found should be flagged so that population development and control efforts can be evaluated. Scouting frequency should be increased during warm weather as whitefly populations multiply faster then.

Trapping with yellow sticky cards, both inside and outside the greenhouse, is essential for a successful whitefly management program. The cards are used to detect and monitor population levels. As a general rule, 1 to 4 cards spaced evenly throughout 1000 square feet of greenhouse are sufficient (1). A generally acceptable threshold for whiteflies is 0.5 per card per day when the crop is young, and 2 per card per day as the crop reaches maturity (2). Traps should be hung level with the tops of the plants since whiteflies are most attracted to young foliage. Doors, vents and other openings where whiteflies can enter the greenhouse are other good sites to hang yellow sticky cards.

Researchers in California have successfully used silver-painted pot spaces and silver polyethylene mulch to control whiteflies on greenhouse poinsettias (3). The reflective materials were used in conjunction with yellow sticky cards or tape and resulted in significantly enhanced trapping of whiteflies, relative to controls with sticky traps only.

Greenhouse plastics themselves may have significant influence on the initial attraction of insects into greenhouses. A study from the late 1990s showed that silverleaf whiteflies preferred to enter greenhouses covered with film that transmitted higher levels of ultraviolet light (4).

## **Biological Control**

Several types of beneficial organisms are available for biological control of whiteflies. The parasitic wasp *Encarsia formosa* preys on immature whiteflies and is commonly used for greenhouse whitefly. *Encarsia* wasps kill whitefly nymphs in one of two ways: they either lay an egg inside the nymph, providing food for their young, or they kill the nymph right away and feed on the fluids inside of it (2). Greenhouse whitefly pupae that have been parasitized by *Encarsia formosa* turn black; silverleaf whitefly pupae turn amber-brown (2). The cost of *E. formosa* is comparable to foliar pesticides (2).

Sweetpotato and silverleaf whiteflies are not well controlled by *Encarsia formosa*. Two other wasp parasites, *Encarsia luteola* and *Eretmocerus californicus* are commercially available for control of these species, but *E. formosa* remains the mainstay of most whitefly biological control programs due to the expense and intermittent availability of these other beneficials (5). Researchers are also examining different strains of *E. formosa* to determine their effectiveness against sweetpotato and silverleaf whiteflies.

Mark Hoddle, University of California, Riverside, has done some recent research dealing with *Eretmocerus eremicus. E. eremicus* was effective for silverleaf whitefly control and is best used in combination with the insect growth regulators Precision<sup>TM</sup> or Applaud<sup>TM</sup>. Enstar<sup>TM</sup> was not compatible with natural enemies he tested. Biological control should be used only at low whitefly levels (less than one nymph per 10 cuttings) and must be regularly evaluated (6). Mark has also compared the effectiveness of *Encarsia formosa* and *Eretmocerus californicus* on silverleaf whitefly. In a 1996 study, both parasitoids controlled whiteflies at a 99% control rate. However, fewer numbers of *E. californicus* had to be released, which would result in cost savings for growers. Another benefit: Fewer parasitoids meant more food for each, so the reproduction rate was much higher (7).

*Delphastus pusillus,* sometimes called the whitefly destroyer, is a very small, black ladybird beetle that attacks all stages of whiteflies, but prefers eggs and nymphs. The females lay their eggs within clusters of whitefly eggs. Adults can consume 160 eggs or 12 large nymphs every day. A larva consumes 1000 whitefly eggs during its development. These beetles perform best at temperatures between 65 and 90°F, with relative humidity above 70%. These predators can be used in combination with *Encarsia* species (8).

See **Appendix I** for a complete listing of biological controls for whiteflies.

## **Biopesticides and Biorational Pesticides**

Some microorganisms also control whiteflies. For instance, the fungus *Beauveria bassiana* (trade names Naturalis-O<sup>™</sup> and BotaniGard<sup>™</sup>), is effective against eggs, immature and adult whiteflies. Thorough coverage of leaf undersides and correct timing of applications result in best control.

Another fungus, *Paecilomyces fumosoroseus* (trade name PFR-97<sup>TM</sup>), is now commercially available. It controls whiteflies, aphids, and spider mites. Both *B. bassiana* and *P. fumosoroseus* need high humidity for best results.

Several least-toxic, or biorational, pesticides have been evaluated for their effectiveness against the different whitefly species. These include neem-based formulations (Neemazad<sup>TM</sup> and Azatin<sup>TM</sup> are two registered products), insecticidal soap (M-Pede<sup>TM</sup>), and horticultural oil. Enhanced whitefly control is achieved with thorough spray coverage. Wider plant spacing and removal of dead lower leaves improve pesticide coverage and pest control.

A 1995 study conducted in Florida compared the effectiveness of Sunspray Ultra-Fine Spray Oil<sup>TM</sup>, M-Pede insecticidal soap, a sucrose ester extract surfactant derived from tobacco, and Garlic Barrier<sup>TM</sup>, for killing and repelling silverleaf whiteflies (*Bemisia argentifolii*) on tomatoes. Sunspray provided the best control, followed by M-Pede and the tobacco surfactant. The Garlic Barrier did not provide any control (9).

Researchers at Ohio State University showed that mortality rates of silverleaf whitefly were higher when BotaniGard was used together with Adept<sup>TM</sup> (an insect growth regulator), insecticidal soaps, horticultural oil, Fulex SO-2000, glycerol and a yeast extract (10). In most cases, the rate of infection and kill was faster than with BotaniGard alone. This is important because it would allow more biopesticides and biorationals to be used retroactively. When several substances are used together, they are applied at lower-than-recommended rates (one-tenth to one-half were used in this study). The researchers are trying to "develop management guidelines on spray-tank mixes that would enhance fungal efficacy" (10).

See **Appendix II** for a complete listing of biopesticides and biorational pesticides available for whitefly management.

## **Insect Growth Regulators**

Insect growth regulators (IGRs) are another leasttoxic pesticide control option. IGRs typically kill insects by disrupting their development. They have a complex mode of action that precludes insects from rapidly developing resistance. IGRs can work in one of several ways: 1) they can mimic juvenile hormones, so that insects never enter the reproductive stage of development; 2) they can interfere with the production of chitin, which makes up the shell of most insects; or 3) they can interfere with the molting process. IGRs usually work through ingestion, so good spray coverage is essential. They generally don't affect non-target species – such as humans, birds, fish or other vertebrates. For most IGRs there are minimal re-entry restrictions. IGRs typically take several days to have an effect on pest populations. Because IGRs do not affect mature insects, adult beneficials released into the greenhouse after an IGR application are not likely to be affected. Use of IGRs is generally prohibited by organic certification organizations because the products are synthetic.

IGRs can sometimes be used in conjunction with biological control efforts and may provide growers with a "safety net" should beneficials fail to keep the pests below economically damaging levels. The table below lists some well-known insect growth regulators. (See the **Resources** section for suppliers' contact information.)

#### Table 1. Selected Insect Growth Regulators

Brand Name	Supplier
Adept, Dimlin Azatin	Uniroyal Chemicals Hydro-Gardens, Olympic Horticultural Products
Citation, Precision	Novartis
Distance	Valent
Enstar II	Wellmark Intl.
Neemazad, Neemix	Thermo Trilogy
Preclude, Pyrigro	Whitmire Micro-Gen

### **Controlled Atmosphere**

Changing the composition of the atmosphere in the greenhouse by either reducing oxygen or increasing carbon dioxide appears to provide some control of greenhouse whiteflies, especially adults. Reduced-oxygen experiments by Dr. Susan Han at the University of Massachusetts resulted in 100% adult mortality after less than two hours of exposure, though eight-hour treatments were needed to control most (about 80%) of the eggs and pupae (11). Horticulturists at North Carolina State University reported that whitefly population levels were lower in greenhouses where carbon dioxide enrichment occurred daily for about eight hours. The likely reason for the population reductions is that plants grown in atmospheres with high carbon dioxide levels tend to have higher concentrations of carbohydrates in the plant tissue relative to nitrogen, resulting in a nitrogen-dilute diet for the whiteflies. Lower dietary nitrogen would slow the growth and reproduction of the pests, without adversely affecting crop yields or quality (12).

#### References

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- 9) Williams, Greg and Pat. 1995. Oil, soap, surfactant, and garlic vs. whiteflies on tomatoes. HortIdeas. May. p. 55–56.
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- 12) Tripp, Kim and Mary Peet. 1993. New use for CO<sub>2</sub>: Slowing whiteflies. American Vegetable Grower. November. p. 43–44

## Web Sites

http://www.ifas.ufl.edu/~ent2/wfly/index.html USDA's Whitefly Knowledgebase

http://www.imok.ufl.edu/entlab/projects/ whitefly.htm Information on silverleaf whitefly from the

University of Florida

http://pwa.ars.usda.gov/wcrl//wwghome.html Whitefly Working Group's site on whitefly research at the University of Arizona

## Suppliers

A-1 Unique Insect Control 5504 Sperry Dr. Citrus Heights, CA 95621 916-961-7945 916-967-7082 fax Email: ladybugs@a-1unique.com http://www.a-1unique.com ARBICO Inc. PO Box 4247 CRB Tucson, AZ 85738 800-SOS-BUGS 520-825-2038 fax Email: arbico@aol.com http://www.arbico.com

Beneficial Insectary 14751 Oak Run Rd. Oak Run, CA 96069 800-477-3715 530-472-3523 fax Email: bi@insectary.com http://www.insectary.com

BioLogic Co. PO Box 177 Willow Hill, PA 17271 Email: pyealber@epix.net 717-349-2789/292

Caltec Agri-Marketing Services PO Box 576155 Modesto, CA 95357 209-575-1295 209-575-0366 fax http://www.caltecag.com

Florikan ESA Corp. 1523 Edger Place Sarasota, FL 34240 800-322-8666 941-377-3633 fax Email: buglady@aol.com

The Green Spot, Ltd. 93 Priest Rd. Nottingham, NH 03290-6204 603-942-8925 603-942-8932 603-942-5027 voice mail Email: GrnSpt@internetMCI.com

Harmony Farm Supply 3244 Hwy. 116 No. F Sebastopol, CA 95472 707-823-9125 707-823-1734 fax Email: kate@harmonyfarm.com http://www.harmonyfarm.com Hot Pepper Wax, Inc. 305 Third St. Greenville, PA 16125 888-667-3785 724-646-2302 fax Email: lindag@hotpepperwax.com http://www.hotpepperwax.com

Hydro-Gardens, Inc. PO Box 25845 Colorado Springs, CO 80932 719-495-2266 719-531-0506 fax http://www.hydro-gardens.com

International Technology Services Inc. PO Box 19227 Boulder, CO 80308-2227 303-473-9141 303-473-9143 fax Email: intertechserv@worldnet.att.net

IPM Laboratories PO Box 300 Locke, NY 13092-0099 315-497-2063 315-497-3129 Fax http://www.ipmlabs.com

M&R Durango, Inc. PO Box 886 Bayfield, CO 81122 970-259-3521 970-259-3857 fax http://www.goodbug.co

Mycogen Crop Protection 5501 Oberlin Dr. San Diego, CA 92121 800-745-7476 619-453-9089 fax Email: soares@mycogen.com

Mycotech Corp. PO Box 4109 Butte, MT 59702-4109 800-383-4310 406-782-9912 fax Email: mycotech@montana.com Natural Pest Controls 8864 Little Creek Dr. Orangeville, CA 95662 916-726-0855 916-726-0855 fax Email: natpestc@cwnet.com http://www.natural-pest-control.com

Nature's Control PO Box 35 Medford, OR 97501 800-698-6250 541-899-9121 fax Email: bugsnc@teleport.com

Novartis Crop Protection, Inc. PO Box 18300 Greensboro, NC 27419-8300 800-395-8873 http://www.cp.us.novartis.com

Olympic Horticultural Products PO Box 1885 Bradenton, FL 34206-1885 800-659-6745 http://www.hortnet.com/olympic/

Plant Health Care 440 William Pitt Way Pittsburg, PA 15238 800-421-9051 http://www.planthealthcare.com/

Praxis 2723 116<sup>th</sup> Ave. Allegan, MI 49010 616-673-2793 616-673-2793 fax Email: praxis-ibc@datawise.net http://www.praxis-ibc.com

Rincon-Vitova Insectaries, Inc. PO Box 1555 Ventura, CA 93002 800-248-2847 805-643-6267 fax Email: bugnet@west.net http://www.rinconvitova.com SePro Corp. 11550 N. Meridian St., Suite 180 Carmel, IN 46032-4562 800-419-7779 http://www.sepro.com

Soil Technologies Corp. 2103 185<sup>th</sup> St. Fairfield, IA 52556 800-221-7645 515-472-6189 fax Email: soiltech@lisco.com http://www.lisco.com/soiltech

Stoller Enterprises, Inc. 8582 Katy Freeway, Suite 200 Houston, TX 77024 800-539-5283 713-461-4467 fax

Thermo Trilogy Corp. 9145 Guilford Rd., Ste. 175 Columbia, MD 21046 800-847-5620 301-604-7015 fax http://www.thermotrilogy.com

Wellmark International 1000 Tower Lane, Suite 245 Bensonville, IL 60106 800-248-7763 Uniroyal Chemicals Benson Rd. Middlebury, CT 06749 203-573-2400 http://www.uniroyalchemical.com

Whitmire Micro-Gen 3568 Tree Court Ind. Blvd. St. Louis, MO 63122 800-777-8570

> Insect drawings courtesy of Hercules Powder Company; Wilmington, DE-*Handbook of the Insect World* 60p.

By Lane Greer NCAT Agriculture Specialist June 2000

The electronic version of **Greenhouse IPM: Whitefly Control** is located at : http://www.attra.org/attra-pub/ghwhitefly.html

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#### Supplier Organism Pests Controlled Application/Comments Chrysopa carnea Natural Pest Controls, aphids, caterpillars, 1 lacewing/5-30 aphids; 1000 eggs/200 sq. ft. Apply every 1-3 weeks (predator) Beneficial Insectary, mealybugs, scales, as needed. May arrive as eggs, immatures, or adults. spider mites, thrips, Caltec, Arbico, A-1 Unique Insect Control, whiteflies Praxis, Rincon-Vitova, Hydro-Gardens Chrysoperla rufilabris Arbico, Beneficial see above Insectary, IPM Labs., (predator) A-1 Unique Insect Control, Nature's Control, Praxis, Rincon-Vitova *Chrysoperla* spp. M&R Durango, see above Florikan, Green Spot (predator) Coleomegilla imaculata Arbico aphids, caterpillars, 1/sq. ft.; shipped as larvae and eggs. (pink ladybird beetle) mites, scales, thrips, whiteflies Deraeocoris brevis Green Spot aphids, whiteflies, (predator) thrips Arbico, IPM Labora-*Delphastus pusillus* greenhouse whitefly, 2000/3000 sq. ft.; temperature should be 60-85°F. Will feed on spider mites if no whiteflies are available. Should be used along (predatory beetle) tories, Nature's sweetpotato whitefly Control, Harmony Farm with Encarsia formosa and traps. Supply, Hydro-Gardens, Rincon-Vitova, Praxis, Green Spot

## **Appendix I: Beneficial Organisms**

ATTRA // GREENHOUSE IPM SUSTAINABLE WHITEFLY CONTROL

Organism	Supplier	Pests Controlled	Application/Comments
<i>Encarsia formosa</i> (parasitic wasp)	Arbico, Nature's Control, IPM Labora- tories, Intl. Technology Services, Florikan, Harmony Farm Supply, Hydro-Gardens, Natural Pest Controls, A-1 Unique Insect Control, Praxis, Rincon-Vitova, Green Spot	greenhouse whitefly, sweetpotato whitefly, silverleaf whitefly	Release 1/sq. ft. weekly for 3 weeks when pest numbers are low. Release 2-4/sq. ft. when pest numbers are high. Apply when pests are first observed. Should be used in conjunction with traps. May be used along with other beneficials. <i>E. formosa</i> is very susceptible to chemicals. Temps. should be at least 64°F. Re-apply every two weeks.
Encarsia luteola or E. deserti	Hydro-Gardens	whiteflies	
Eretmocerus californicus or E. eremicus (parasitic wasp)	Beneficial Insectary, Hydro-Gardens, IPM Labs., Arbico, Praxis, Green Spot	greenhouse whitefly, silverleaf whitefly, sweetpotato whitefly	Capable of handling hot, dry temperatures. Introduce when whiteflies are first observed. May be used in combination with other beneficials such as green lacewings. <i>Eretmocerus</i> is more tolerant of pesticides than <i>Encarsia formosa</i> .
<i>Harmonia axyridis</i> (Asian lady beetle)	Green Spot	scale, <b>whiteflies</b> , mealybugs, aphids	Temps. should be 70-85°F; humidity around 70%.
<i>Hippodamia convergens</i> (lady beetle) (predator)	A-1 Unique Insect Control, Arbico, Caltec, IPM Labora- tories, Natural Pest Controls, Harmony Farm Supply, Green Spot, Nature's Control, Hydro- Gardens, Praxis	aphids, mites, whiteflies	Release at dusk near an immediate food source. Spray plants with water prior to release.

## **Appendix II: Biorational Pesticides**

Azadirachtin - extract of neem seed; IGR that works through contact or ingestion

Brand Name	Supplier	Pests Controlled	REI	Application/Comments
Azatin	Green Spot	aphids, caterpillars, fungus gnats, leafhoppers, leafminers, Western flower thrips, <b>whiteflies</b> , psyllids	4 hours	Apply when pests first appear.
Neemazad	Thermo Trilogy	aphids, caterpillars, thrips, <b>greenhouse whitefly</b> , leafminers, <b>sweetpotato whitefly</b> , psyllids, leafhoppers	12 hours	Cannot be applied through irrigation. Low rate can be used as a preventative.

Beauveria bassiana - fungus that works through contact; exposure to non-target insects should be avoided

	Brand Name	Supplier	Pests Controlled	REI	Application/Comments
	Naturalis-O	SePro	aphids, caterpillars, mites, psyllids, thrips, <b>whiteflies</b>	4 hours	Apply when insects first appear and repeat every 7-10 days. Need good spray coverage. Not compatible with other fungicides.
	BotaniGard	Mycotech	<b>giant whitefly</b> , green peach aphid, black vine weevil, other aphids and <b>whiteflies</b> , thrips, leafhoppers, psyllids, white grubs	12 hours	See above.
Garlic	extracts				
	Brand Name	Supplier	Pests Controlled	REI	Application/Comments
	Garlic Gard	Soil Tech- nologies	repels many insects		Use late in the day. Can be mixed with fish oil or horticultural oil.

Garlic Barrier Green Spot	repels many insects	4 hours	Do not use in combination with pollinating bees
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Horticultural oil - includes dormant and summer superior oils

Brand Name	Supplier	Pests Controlled	REI	Application/Comments
All Seasons	Green Spot	aphids, mealybugs, scales, thrips, <b>whiteflies</b> , spider mites	4 hours	Use on sunny days to promote rapid drying and decrease chance of phytotoxicity. Not compatible with beneficials.

Hot pepper wax – contains capsaicin, paraffin, and mineral oil

Brand Name	Supplier	Pests Controlled	REI	Application/Comments
Hot Pepper Wax	Green Spot	aphids, loopers, beet army- worms, mites, <b>whiteflies</b> , thrips, mealybugs, etc.	4 hours	Also contains herbal essential oils. Not compatible with beneficials.
Hot Pepper	Hot Pepper	see above		

Insecticidal soap - contains potassium salts of fatty acids

Wax, Inc.

Wax

Brand Name	Supplier	Pests Controlled	REI	Application/Comments
M-Pede	Mycogen	aphids, mealybugs, scales, thrips, <b>whiteflies</b> , spider mites	12 hours	Phytoxicity is often a concern, esp. after repeated applications.
Safer	Green Spot	see above	4 hours	See above.
Insecticidal soap	Olympic	see above		

Application/Comments Brand Name Supplier Pests Controlled REI Trilogy 90EC Thermo greenhouse whitefly, silver-4 hours Apply at first signs of damage. Repeat every 7-10 days leaf whitefly, sweetpotato Trilogy as needed. whitefly, thrips, whiteflies, leafminers, aphids, mites, psyllids, San Jose scale, scale, spider mites, downy mildew, powdery mildew, Alternaria, Botrytis, etc. Triact 90EC For ornamental crops only. Thermo see above 4 hours Trilogy Paecilomyces fumosoroseus – fungus Application/Comments Brand Name Supplier REI Pests Controlled Olympic whiteflies, aphids, spider **PFR-97** 4 hours mites, Western flower thrips Soybean oil Pests Controlled Brand Name Supplier REI Application/Comments Golden Stoller aphids, fungus gnats, lace 12 hours Natur'l Spray bugs, leafminers, scales, Oil mealybugs, spider mites, whiteflies

Neem oil - multi-purpose organic insecticide/fungicide/miticide; kills eggs, larval and adult stages of insects