



# MAGNOLIA SCALE

LANDSCAPE · NURSERY · GARDEN CENTER

Magnolia scale is the largest scale insect in the United States. The host plants in our area are *Magnolia soulangeana* (Saucer Magnolia) and *Magnolia stellata* (Star Magnolia). The adult female scale is rounded, 1/2" in diameter and has a whitish waxy covering. Immature scale or "crawlers" are between 1/8" and 1/4" long and dark slate gray.

## SYMPTOMS

Magnolia scale is a sucking insect that attaches to twigs and stems and sucks out plant juices. Affected stems become enlarged and purple. The insect secretes sticky honeydew onto the leaves on which unsightly black sooty mold forms. Heavy infestations cause undeveloped leaves, twig and branch dieback and general weakening of the plant. Plants under stress or growing in shade seem more prone to attack.

## LIFE CYCLE

Magnolia scale overwinters as mature "pregnant" females. Eggs are laid under the protective covering of the mother in late spring. By late August, the crawlers have grown and moved on in search of feeding sites. Crawlers overwinter on the undersides of 1 and 2 year-old twigs.

## CONTROL

Because magnolia scale has two distinct life stages, both the adult scale and the immature crawlers require control.

- **ADULT** scale has a hard protective covering that makes control with the usual sprays difficult. Dormant Oil applied in late winter/early spring (usually March) will smother them. When using dormant oil, the temperature should stay above 40F degrees for 24 hours after application. **Summer Oil** or **Horticultural Oil** may be used at any time during the growing season to smother adult scale. Dormant oil is usually more effective than summer oil because it is applied when the plants have no leaves, thereby making complete coverage easier. Do not spray oil or insecticides if temperatures are above 85F degrees.
- **CRAWLERS** are easier to control because they do not have a hard protective covering. **Malathion**, **Sevin**, or **Eight** applied in late August to mid September will act as contact killers.
- A **systemic insecticide** has the advantage of being absorbed by the plant and remaining in the plant for 30 days, killing the scales as they feed. Three forms are available, 2 use **Imidacloprid** as the active ingredient. The spray is applied to the leaves and stays in for 30 days. The soil drench is applied around the root collar (where the trunk enters the soil), is taken up into the plant tissue and remains for one year. **Acephate** is the third systemic. It is applied to the leaves, is absorbed and stays in for 30 days.
- **Summer Oil** or **Horticultural Oil** is an alternative to the above chemicals.

Keep your trees healthy by applying a 2-3" layer of mulch (shredded or chunk bark, coarse compost), watering during dry periods and pruning out dead wood.