



Maple spindlegall and bladder gall mites

Vasates aceriscrumena

Vasates quadripedes

Order Acari, Family Eriophyidae; leaf vagrant, gall, erineia, rust, or eriophyid mites

Native pests

Host plants: Spindlegalls on sugar maple; bladdergalls on silver and red maples.

Description: Adult eriophyid mites are too small to detect with a hand lens, so use a dissecting microscope. They range in length from 0.05–0.2 mm, are spindle-shaped, elongate and white with four anterior legs.

Life history: Overwintered adult females move to expanding leaf buds. Females begin feeding and in the process they stimulate leaf cells to form spindle-shaped or bladder-shaped galls, which rise above the leaf surface. The females creep into the hollow galls and begin reproduction. Young mites develop within the gall cavity by removing cell contents along the inner lining. By July, the galls begin to dry out. The result is the gall splits open or a hole at the base opens, and the new adults exit the gall to seek shelter on the branches under bark flaps for the winter.

Overwintering: Adults in bark cracks.

Damage symptoms: Spindlegall and bladdergall mites cause slender, spindle-shaped or bladder-shaped galls on the upper surfaces of leaves. Both gall types change color from green to red and finally to black. Infestations can be startling, because of the brightly colored galls, but there are no other symptoms and usually no serious damage.

Monitoring: Look for galls forming in spring as new leaves are developing. Check gall numbers in midsummer to estimate infestation for the following year.

Chemical control: Most galls cause only aesthetic injury and do not kill their hosts. Control is very difficult to achieve, and pesticide use must be timed to when the adult is initiating the gall. Adult mites are most susceptible to dormant applications of oil when they become active in spring prior to bud break. Control is only marginally effective, and some broad spectrum insecticides have actually worsened the problem. Since these gall makers spend the winter as adults on the tree, keeping old galls around will not contribute to future gall problems and may conserve natural enemies.

Biological control: No reports of natural enemies

Plant mortality risk: Low

Biorational pesticides: None

Conventional pesticides: carbaryl



Spindlegalls on maple leaf caused by maple spindlegall eriophyid mites. (167)
Photo: John Davidson