

How to prevent aphid attacks and how to treat affected plants - specialist tips

This might become a hot topic this spring with the very rapidly varying temperatures and with our chaotic weather patterns. So keep an eye open on your plants.

So far there are very few aphids to be seen in Southern England and I have seen gardens all the way from Devon to Sussex. But some of my course participants are inundated.

For those, who are in touch with their plants every day, you have a great advantage to be able to recognize the signs, long before the aphids will have taken over your plants and will then notice that they have been actively damaging the stomata on the underside of the leaves.

What signs are we looking for before aphids appear?

Atmospheric imbalances:

- Too much warmth in the air environment compared to soil warmth
- Fierce, burning light from a super blue sky and clear nights when temperatures plummet
- Not enough warming, red light and too much blue light spectrum
- Hot days and cold nights.

Other imbalances that might cause the appearance of aphids:

- Over fertilization with nitrogen rich compost (effective humus)
- Over fertilization with liquid foliar feeds
- Application of liquid manures to soil combined with cold nights
- All of the above with sudden drought and cold weather.

What are the signs of when aphids are on your plants but not visible yet?

- When you see ants on your plants, you definitely have aphids
- Young leaves start curling
- Young leaves start discolouring with pale stripes, black and red spots or crinkled surface areas
- You see ladybird larvae or ladybirds in the vicinity of your affected plants.

What measures can we take to prevent aphids?

- Apply only well matured compost and feed the soil, rather than the plants
- Protect the plants from excess cold at night by having planted hedges
- Harden off your plants well before planting out
- Protect the plants from excess cold at night with thermal fleece or cloches
- Apply Valerian preparation in the late afternoon before temperatures plummet
- Sprinkle/spray the horn manure in the evening to regulate moisture environment
- If you incorporated green manure before transplanting, make sure you apply the barrel compost preparation too
- In young plants, make your horsetail preparation by simmering 350 g of fresh horsetail for 2 minutes in 2-3 litres of water and let it sit for one day before taking 100 ml and mix with 1 litre of rainwater and apply as a foliar spray for fast action or apply to the soil for slower action
- In older plants spray the horn silica preparation to strengthen cuticula.

What remedies do we have to cure the plants, when aphids appear?

- Harvest 1 kg of stinging nettles, chop them up and immerse them over night in

10 litres of water. Then apply liquid as a fine mist particularly on the underside of leaves of affected plants

- Use 100 ml of soft-soap in 1 litre of water and spray as fine mist on the affected leaves as above.

As you can see it is actually pretty simple, except we need to develop an intimate and loyal relationship with our plants, to spend time with them and take time to observe them every day, particularly in April and May, when all the insects are coming into their own right.

All that remains now, is for you enjoy developing this relationship that some people call green fingers or luck.

Next week I will introduce more on preventing attacks and a further biodynamic method to prevent and cure aphid attacks.

Blessings and happy gardening

Hans-Gunther