

Spring is right around the corner and so are thrips. Now is the time to start looking for thrips and to be prepared. It is far less costly to prevent damage than to react once damage occurs. Our experience shows that thrips can attack buds as soon as the flower bud shell cracks, or as soon as color shows. Here are some suggestions to help you prepare for thrips before they arrive.

Monitoring

Because of their small size, the presence of thrips usually goes unnoticed until the damage is done. At this point control becomes even more difficult and is often not achievable.

In order to minimize this risk, it is important to determine if and to what degree thrips are present in the greenhouse or growing area before the crop begins to flower or prior to moving a flowering crop into that area.

Yellow Cards

The use of yellow sticky cards is an excellent tool for monitoring thrips and other pest populations. The number of yellow cards you use will vary depending upon the size of your greenhouse and the number of crops that you grow. These cards should be placed at least one every 10,000 square

feet, just above crop height. If the greenhouse contains more than one crop, then a yellow card for each crop is suggested. They can also be placed near doorways and cooling pads to help monitor these likely entry zones. Ideally, it would be best to check and replace these cards three times a week. Using them in this manner will enable you to react to an influx of thrips more quickly, as well as help you evaluate the effectiveness of your spray program. At the very least, sticky cards should be read and changed once per week.

Blue sticky cards can also be used to help monitor for thrips. Research has shown that thrips are slightly more attracted to this color. However, the yellow card remains a more versatile monitoring tool and is quite effective in attracting most flying greenhouse pests.

Sampling

Plants and flowers already in place in the greenhouse can be checked for thrips by physically shaking them over a piece of paper. White paper is most commonly used when checking for adult thrips, while black paper shows younger stages more easily. A small 20x hand lens will be helpful when inspecting these finds.

Control Options

Eliminate or reduce weeds within and adjacent to the greenhouse. Weeds are notorious for harboring thrips, mites, aphids and viruses - and could be the overwintering host and source of the problem.

During periods of high pressure or when infestations are detected, sprays should be applied every three to four days. This interval can be reduced to once every five days when populations are moderate and once every seven days when populations are low and no protection is needed.

With the exception of granular products, thorough coverage is essential for any chemical to be effective. Spray the top and underside of foliage, keeping in mind that spray penetration into the flower once it begins to open is the most critical. Check the nozzles on the spray equipment to determine if you are getting good coverage.

It is also essential that you use a rotation of products with each application.

Before using any pesticides, be sure they are registered for use. Follow label directions. The label is the law.

Pesticides labeled for controlling thrips

Chemical Class

Organophosphates
Pyrethroids
Glycoside
Biologicals
Unclassified

Product

Orthene, Chloropyrifus
Talstar, Mavrik, Decathlon
Avid
Azatin, Botani Gard, Conserve*
Overture

*We have had good results using a rotation of Unclassified and Overture.