



The Plant Doctor's LANDSCAPE TIPS

By David L. Roberts, Ph.D, *Michigan State University*

IMPORTED HONEYSUCKLE APHID & WITCHES' BROOM

INTRODUCTION:

Honeysuckle, *Lonicera* sp, is a widely used shrub in landscapes. Honeysuckle is also widely found in natural areas. One of honeysuckle's most common and conspicuous problems is caused by the Imported Honeysuckle Aphid, *Hyadaphis tataricae*. This aphid probably originated from Asia; it was likely introduced into North America from Europe.

Honeysuckle is usually installed in landscapes for its unique texture, the wonderful, wafting smell provided by its flowers and because it generally requires little maintenance. However, the imported honeysuckle aphid can cause severe damage to plants (Photo 1). The insect may limit the growth of honeysuckle, cause unsightly damage, and inhibit flowering. In some cases, honeysuckle shrubs may be killed by the insect.

SYMPTOMS AND IMPORTED HONEYSUCKLE APHID LIFE CYCLE:

It has been reported that the Imported Honeysuckle Aphid only attacks honeysuckle and completes its entire life cycle on this plant. The insect overwinters as eggs on the affected portions, usually the infested and distorted branch tips. The eggs hatch in the spring at about the same time honeysuckle buds begin swelling. Young aphids feed on the newly emerging leaves, preferring the midrib region of the leaves (Photo 2). This midrib feeding induces the leaf to curl up, enclosing the aphids in a nice protective pouch. The wingless aphids continue to feed, but by the third generation, winged forms develop and disperse to other shrubs during the remainder of the summer season. The imported honeysuckle aphid, like many other aphids, births young aphids live (parthenogenesis) without the egg stage. By late summer, egg-laying females develop and eggs are laid in the shoots in preparation for the overwintering stage of the insect.

The aphids' feeding causes severe stunting, yellowing and distortion of the foliage of honeysuckle (Photo 1). The symptoms may be mistaken for herbicide or other chemical toxicity. Because feeding may start after the initial growth of the shrub, the earliest growth may appear unaffected while later growth may show the typical symptoms of imported honeysuckle aphid damage. After the initial infection, it may take at least 2 to 3 years before all shoots become infested on a particular plant. Very susceptible honeysuckle species may be killed by the aphid. It is very common to find lady bugs on affected honeysuckle foliage as they "mop up" the aphids (Photo 3).

IMPORTED HONEYSUCKLE APHID MANAGEMENT:

Lonicera spp. and their varieties vary widely in their susceptibility to the aphid. Seriously consider species or varieties that are tolerant or resistant to this pest when contemplating new honeysuckle plants for a landscape. For example: *Lonicera caerulea* ('edulis,' 'dependens,' 'viridifolia,' etc.), *L. discolor*, *L. heteroloba*, *L. altmannii*, and *L. morrowii*, etc. are reported to be resistant to the imported honeysuckle aphid; *L. syringantha* 'Grandiflora,' *L. maackii*, *L. tatarinovii*, *L. minutiflora* and *L. ledebourii* are reported to be tolerant to the aphid; *L. microphylla*, *L. myrtilloides*, *L. tatarica* ('Grandiflora,' 'Rosea,' 'Red Giant') are reported as susceptible.

On existing plants, it may help to prune off infested stems well below the witches broom to remove the overwintering eggs. Pruning should be completed during the dormant period but before bud-break in the spring.

Dormant oils applied to the stems/branches in the spring before bud-break in the spring may smother overwintering eggs. If warranted, broad spectrum insecticides or various botanicals applied to newly emerging foliage or later (to protect against winged aphids) may help manage the insect. Please consider that insecticides will harm other biological organisms, such as lady bugs, which may also help manage the imported honeysuckle aphid naturally (Photo 3). ■

For more information, please feel free to email me at robertsd@msu.edu or contact a professional plant health-care provider. The author, MSU or MGIA do not endorse any particular products. If using pesticides, be sure to read and follow label directions.



Photo 1. Typical symptoms of Imported Honeysuckle Aphid includes severe stunting of the shoots and foliage, sickly light green foliage, and distorted foliage that usually "wilts" by late summer.



Photo 2. The imported honeysuckle aphid, similar to other aphids, develops "colonies" due to their rapid reproduction. The feeding habits by so many aphids can cause severe harm to plant tissue. (Photo Credit: Kansas Department of Agriculture)



Photo 3. It is not unusual to witness an abundance of lady bugs feeding on the aphids. Although not particularly effective in preventing the objectionable symptoms caused by imported honeysuckle aphid, the lady bugs indicate natural biological management in action.