Greenhouse Pest Message, September 28, 2022
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Two Spotted Spider Mites Clean-up – with the extended warm fall temperatures, two-spotted spider mites may be still found on a wide range of plants including herbaceous perennials, fall crops, greenhouse tomatoes, weeds, and any leftover unsold plants.

Now is a good time to clean up any empty greenhouses, so you do not allow spider mite-infested weeds, and unsold plants to remain in the greenhouse. Remove plant debris and spilled growing media, too.

Remove infested plants at the end of the day (so you do not inadvertently spread the mites as you are working within the greenhouse) as they like to crawl up your arms!

When plants are heavily infested, spider mites may fall to the ground and walk to other plants or move from one leaf to another if plants are touching. They also produce silken threads or webbing, which they can use to "rope-down" to the leaves of other plants. Adult females also tend to migrate to the top of plants where air currents can help them disperse to other plants.

Figure 1: Spider mite webbing. Photo by L. Pundt

Be sure cull piles are far away as possible from the greenhouse.

If you are growing poinsettias, keep in mind that spider mites can also occasionally infest poinsettias as they move from any infested weeds to the poinsettias.

Figure 2: Spider mite damage on poinsettia. Photo by L. Pundt

Figure 3: Look on underside of leaves, especially along the mid vein, for small, 1/50-inch-long, greenish to orange mite with characteristic two dark spots on either side of abdomen and their round eggs. Photo by L. Pundt

Two-spotted spider mites enter a hibernation phase known as "diapause" during adverse environmental conditions such as decreasing day length, decreasing temperatures and a decline in their food supply. Females change color, turning orange to orange red in color. After mating, the overwintering females tend to walk off the plants to hide in cracks and crevices in the greenhouse, away from the light. During this hibernation phase, they do not eat, or lay eggs, and are less susceptible to chemical pesticides.

Diapausing spider mites are also more difficult for predatory mites to find because they are hiding in concealed places.

You may have a spider mite problem in the same location from year to year, for the two spotted spider mites become active when temperatures increase to about 50° F and move to the plants nearest the edge of the greenhouses.

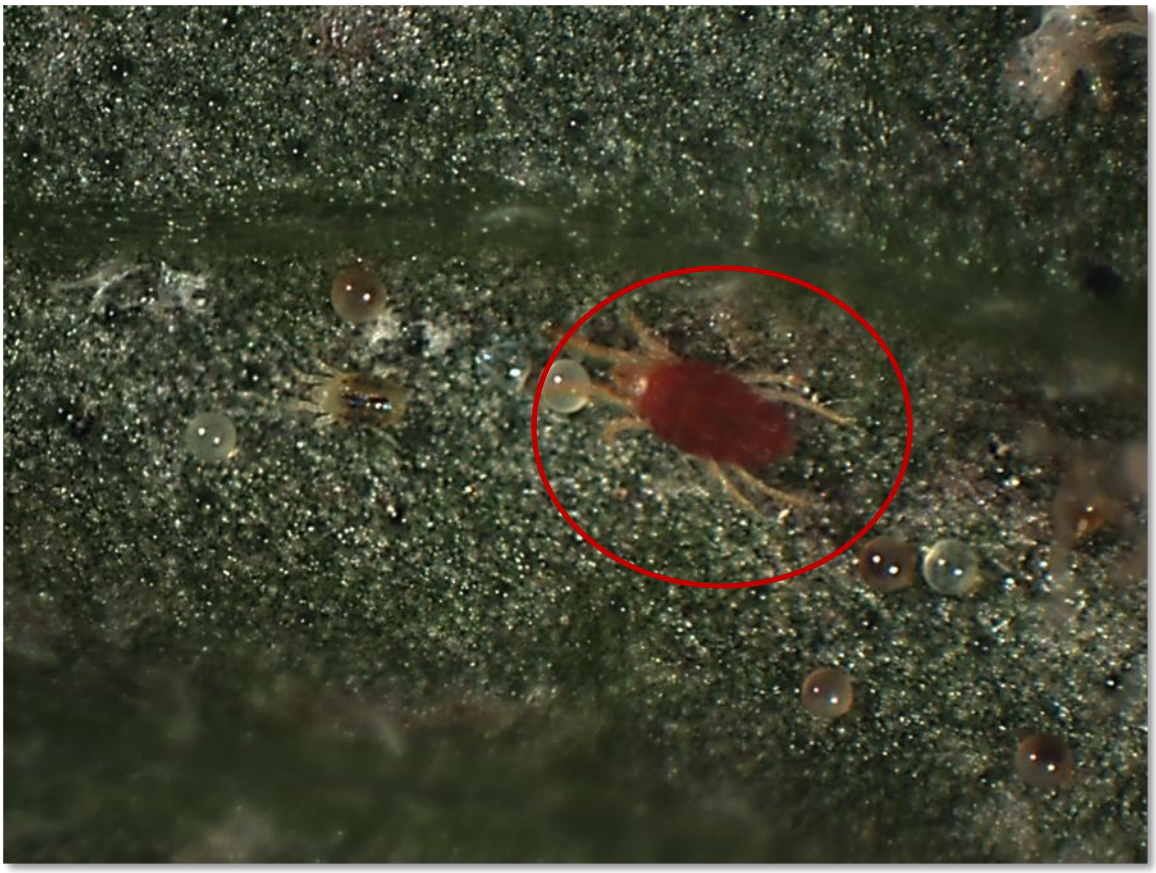

Figure 4: Two-spotted spider mites, round eggs, and bright orange red diapausing or overwintering female spider mite (within circle). Photo by L. Pundt

Funding provided by USDA NIFA CPPM grant 2021-70006-35582.