

Spittlebugs

Introduction

Spittlebugs are known for the frothy spittle mass they produce while feeding on plants. One of the most common species found is the meadow spittlebug (*Philaenus spumarius*).

Feeding Damage

Their distinctive, white frothy mass resembling "spittle" surrounds the small, (1/4 of an inch long) light-greenish, immature nymphs. This foam helps protect the nymphs from desiccation and predation from enemies. However, customers may object to the presence of the spittle even though it does not harm the plant.

Biology and Life Cycle

Spittle masses usually persist for about 3 or 4 weeks. The adults are 1/4 of an inch long with a short, stout appearance. Because they look like a small frog, they are known as "froghoppers". Adults lay eggs in late August and September. There is only one generation per year.

Scouting

Meadow spittlebugs can be occasionally found on many different herbaceous perennials such as *achillea*, *coreopsis*, *phlox*, *boltonia*, *potentilla* and many others. Unfortunately, they often appear when growers are shipping plants.



Figure 1 & 2: Spittle masses. Photos by L. Pundt

Cultural Controls

If only a few spittlebugs are present, you can just either forcefully hose the spittle off the plants or use a gloved hand to remove the spittle.

References

Allen, J. 2017. Spittlebug: A Unique Little Insect

<https://bugs.uconn.edu/2017/07/24/spittlebug-a-unique-little-insect/>

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<https://extension.umn.edu/yard-and-garden-insects/spittlebugs>

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