United States Department of Agriculture

# The Azalea Lace Bug: Pretty but still a Pest

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Azalea leaves with frass spots

Adult and nymph azalea lace bug

As a nursery, landscape manager, or homeowner you have likely seen stippling damage from azalea lace bugs on your azaleas and rhododendrons.

These dainty insects arrived in Oregon in 2009 and have slowly made themselves at home in urban landscapes. Native to Japan, azalea lace bugs thrive on the underside of leaves as they are hard to reach with contact insecticide; eggs buried into the leaf tissue are equally protected from sprays.

Currently, systemic insecticides are used to ensure marketability of their product since customers will reject plants that have between 6-10% damage. So, what else can be done to protect these ubiquitous plants? We have found that pressurized water sprays followed by predator release can suppress pests, however, this may not be feasible on a large scale.

Therefore, we are investigating strategies that can be conveniently applied. Our preliminary results have shown that supplementing rhododendron with silicon reduces oviposition and feeding.

Testing will continue this season as we try to determine if silicon can markedly reduce azalea lace bug populations as well as answer questions important to our stakeholders: what type of application works best, supplementation frequency and do adjuvants help or hinder. Stay tuned!

Katerina Velasco-Graham graduated recently with her master's from OSU and will continue working in the Lee lab grahkate@oregonstate.edu.

Any questions or suggestion, please contact us at Jana.Lee@ars.usda.gov. Jana Lee is a Research Entomologist with the USDA-ARS HCRU.

Rhododendron's tested for resistance to azalea lace bug

Numerous test units for azalea lace bug resistance

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