



Spider mite in Michigan

August is the time for spider mite, when hot, dry weather favors this pest. Mites move into fields from the edge, often by passive airborne movement. Damage may be noticed first near some obstacle, such as a tree-line or power pole, that disrupts wind near the edge of the field. Mites feed with a piercing mouthpart, inserting it directly into plant cells and sucking out the contents. This type of feeding not only injures or kills plant cells, but results in water loss through the feeding wounds. Mite feeding leaves behind tiny yellow dots or specks on the leaves. As mite numbers and feeding increase, the yellowing becomes more apparent across the leaf surface. Cells are disrupted, water is lost, and plant tissue begins to die. Under severe infestation, leaves brown and eventually drop off the plant. Mites are best seen with a hand lens, especially by shaking plant foliage over a white piece of paper. Not everything on the paper will be mites - you may see tiny insects such as thrips or springtails, or even dirt. A heavy mite infestation, however, is fairly obvious to the naked eye, with leaf speckling and yellowing, obvious numbers of mites on the undersides of leaves, plus webbing.

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