

FBMG Help Desk
Question of the Week

What is this black stuff all over my tree and
what should I do?

You have black sooty mold.



Actually a Fungus

Black Sooty mold fungi feed on and break down a sugary substance, called honeydew, which is secreted by insects such as aphids, mealybugs & whiteflies to name a few.

While it is unsightly your plant is not really in any danger from black sooty mold.

- *It is usually easily rubbed off the fruit, leaves and or branches of the affected plant.*
- *If conditions remain dry, it may dry up and fall off on its own.*
- *Rain will wash most of it to the ground.*
- *A gentle stream from the hose can wash it off.*
- *Some of the leaves may fall off and the plant may look bad, keep an eye out for new growth it should appear soon.*
- *The fungi that causes sooty mold can occur on a variety of plants to include fig, citrus, oleander, crapemyrtle & other trees and shrubs where it is dormant until a food source appears.*



********Black Sooty Mold is actually an indication of an insect issue. Reduce the insects reduce the sooty mold********

An Indication of Something Else

Black Sooty mold needs a food source.

Actually an indication of an insect issue. The best way to control the black sooty mold is by controlling the insect population. Treatments harm the good insects along with the pests.



- **Water from the hose can be used over a period of days to wash the insects to the ground (this is best done in the early morning)**
- **Insecticidal soap can be applied, make sure to follow all of the manufacture's instructions.**
- **Neem oil is an option.**
- **Inviting predators such as ladybugs, and lacewings into the garden**

****** Be Aware that any insecticidal soaps, insecticides or oils must be matched with the correct insect or they will not be effective. ******

Mother Nature at work!

If you see these - Congratulations, natural predators have already moved in!



At left a lady beetle larva with a voracious appetite for honeydew secreting insects.

• *Once the larvae appear the adults are already established. Congratulations on a thriving environment.*

- *Tissue piercing, sap sucking, honeydew secreting insects to include but not limited to aphids, mealybugs, whiteflies, scale and psyllids have natural enemies to include but not limited to lady bugs, lacewings, spiders, syrphid flies, soldier beetles, and pirate bugs. It is usually their larva who have the most voracious appetites.*

At right a lacewing larva with a voracious appetite for honeydew secreting insects.



Protected and Farmed by Ants

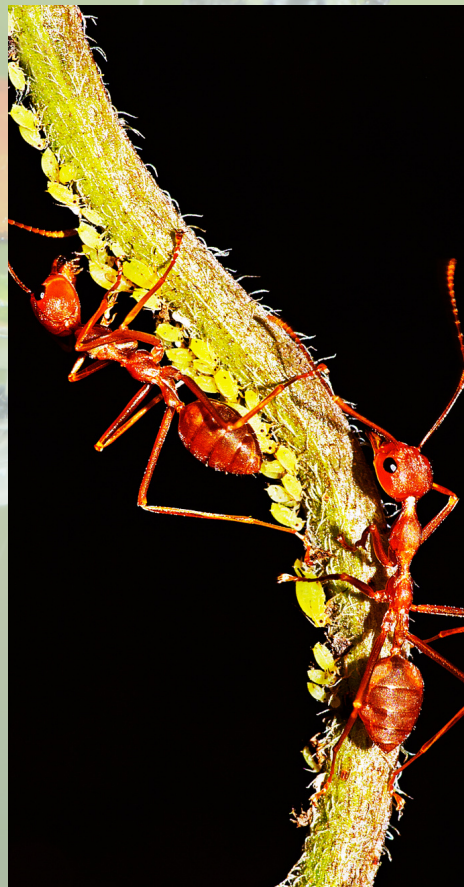
Honeydew a food source for ants!



An increase in ant activity on a plant is a sign of possible increased insect populations.



- *The same honeydew that feeds the Black Sooty Mold Fungi, feeds ants.*
- *Ants will farm and protect honeydew secreting insects such as aphids, mealybugs, scale, bark lice and others*



Ants attack lacewing larva to protect their mealy bug herd.

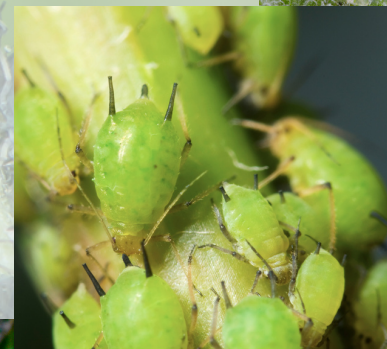


There is a battle going on in your garden!

What to look for and where.

Aphids, mealy bugs, whiteflies, barklice, scale are often the most common honeydew secreting insects.

- *Most often found under leaves*
- *Can be hosed off with a stream of water*
- *Are more prevalent in hot humid weather*
- *Are encouraged by over pruning and over irrigation*
- *Watch for increased ant activity up and down plants*
- *Match the treatment to the insect*
- *Invite predators to yard*



*Do you have questions
about your home
landscape and plants?*

*Contact the Fort Bend
Master Gardener Help Desk*

*Email:
FortBendmg@ag.tamu.edu*

*Phone:
281-341-7068*

*The Help Desk is manned
Monday thru Friday,
9am-Noon*

*[Aphids](#) | [Entomology \(uky.edu\)](#)
[Sooty Mold](#) | [Texas Plant Disease Handbook \(tamu.edu\)](#)
https://aggie-hort.tamu.edu/galveston/beneficials/beneficial-15_ladybug_mealybug_destroyer.htm
[EENY204/IN361: Multicolored Asian Lady Beetle, Harmonia axyridis Pallas \(Insecta: Coleoptera: Coccinellidae\) \(ufl.edu\)](#)
<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/IN361>
Crape Myrtle Diseases & Insect Pests | Home & Garden Information Center (clemson.edu)
Sooty Mold | Texas Plant Disease Handbook (tamu.edu)*

*[Center for Agriculture, Food, and the Environment](#)
[UMass Extension Landscape, Nursery and Urban Forestry Program](#)
<https://ag.umass.edu/landscape/fact-sheets/beechn-blight-aphid>
[Pest Alert – Sooty Mold, Harmless Fungus Indicates Insect Feeding](#) | [Extension Marketing and Communications \(ncsu.edu\)](#)
[What's that black mold on my plant? - UF/IFAS Extension Highlands County \(ufl.edu\)](#)
[Non harmful tree conditions](#) | [UMN ExtensionNon](#)
[Microsoft Word - Black, Sooty Mold on Landscape Plants.doc \(ufl.edu\)](#)
[Sooty Mold](#) | [Texas Plant Disease Handbook \(tamu.edu\)](#)
[The Plant Doctor - Sooty Mold](#) | [Mississippi State University Extension Service \(msstate.edu\)](#)
[Mealybugs Management Guidelines--UC IPM \(ucanr.edu\)](#)
[Author: M. L. Flint, UC Statewide IPM Program and Entomology, UC Davis](#)
[Editor: C. Laning](#)
[Crapemyrtle aphid photo by Jim Baker, North Carolina State University, Bugwood.or](#)
[Aphids Management Guidelines--UC IPM \(ucanr.edu\)](#)
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