

# Herbs, Perennials, and Bedding Plants Crop Recommendation

By Applied Bio-nomics Ltd.

## OVERVIEW:

In a mono-culture such as a Sweet Pepper house, it is easy to introduce a monitoring/trap/banker plant, such as eggplant that is universally more attractive to the pests than the main crop. With Bedding Plant, Herbs and Perennials, you will find that certain plants and even cultivars will become the target of certain pests, and sometimes only at certain times of the season. That being said, eggplants still perform well and will help with most crops and at most times of the seasons. By keeping a diary of when and where pests show up, you will be able to target your releases and time them more accurately.

## PRIOR TO PLANTING OUT

The house should be thoroughly cleaned. Walls, floors, posts, wires, etc. should be washed with soap or another suitable cleaning product. Whiteflies and aphids will persist in cool greenhouses for well over one week without any plant material available, but they will be killed with a thorough cleanup.

If the house has a history of spider mites, they will be hiding in the ground around the posts and the walls. An introduction of *Stratiolaelaps scimitus* (25 mites per square foot, more if high levels of spider mites were present) at each post and along the walls will help kill the overwintering spider mites.

## AT PLANTING OUT

Because fungus gnats can have a significant impact on the rate of growth of your plants, it is essential that they are controlled immediately. Apply *Stratiolaelaps scimitus* at a rate of 125 mites per plant. *Stratiolaelaps* can be diluted with sawdust or vermiculite but it is difficult to maintain an even distribution immediately after the mixing. Skipping plants can work in clean houses, as the *Stratiolaelaps* will disperse themselves quite well. Within one week, apply nematodes at the recommended rate. This application will have two effects: first, they will kill some of the fungus gnats. Second, they will act as a food source for the *Stratiolaelaps*, which will help them disperse into the entire crop and establish. If there is a very high count of fungus gnats, you should consider

altering the soil mix slightly, as subtle variations in the soil mix will have significant impact on whether or not the fungus gnats will explode in population. Raw potato slices should be used to monitor the relative numbers and stages of the fungus gnat larvae. Try placing a slice of potato on the soil surface for a known time. The fungus gnat larvae are attracted to the potato and when lifted, will give you a relative count. Repeated monitoring for the same duration of exposure will give you an indication whether the problem is getting better or worse. If the soil is loose, the rove beetle *Dalotia coriaria* (*Atheta coriaria*) should also be applied at 0.1 to 1.0 per 10 square feet just once.

Apply *Encarsia formosa* at a rate of 0.25 per 10 square feet if no whitefly is detected. At 1-2 whiteflies per yellow card, per week, increase rate to 1 per 10 square feet. See below: Whitefly Strategy Overview.

## EARLY SEASON

Spider mites should be watched carefully, as the damage is permanent. Preventative releases of *Amblyseius fallacis* in the granular carrier should be made prior to the historical arrival of spider mites. For houses that have a history of spider mites, bean plants should be grown around the walls and touching table legs. The beans will attract the spider mites and show damage very quickly which will help with monitoring. Once spider mites are present, apply *Phytoseiulus persimilis* to the beans at an approximate ratio of 1 to 100. The bush



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beans will become bankers, releasing persimilis up onto the tables for as long as the spider mites survive. In most cases, this will be a long time, as the spider mites come out of hibernation over a very long period of time. Bean leaves that display a ratio of 1 to 10 (persimilis to spider mites) can be used to treat remote infestations. *Feltiella acarisuga* may volunteer in a cool season crop, but its habit of pupating on the plant leaves may cause more problems. If the spider mites are under control, it is unlikely that *Feltiella* will populate the crop.

Whitefly must never be given a chance to increase. A count of over 2 whiteflies per week on the yellow sticky cards should be reacted to immediately. Rates of *Encarsia* should go up to 6 per 10 square feet, per week and *Delphastus catalinae* should be introduced at a minimum of 100 per 2.5 acres every two weeks until the counts are brought back in line. Once the leaves become sticky with honeydew, the parasitoids movement becomes impaired. *Delphastus* releases should be increased up to 5,000 per 2.5 acres if control is at stake. The use of eggplant strategically located along the aisles, at a rate of 4 to 6 per 2.5 acres, will help draw the whitefly out of the crop. The eggplant is preferred by the whitefly, can be used to trap, and can be a very effective banker system. High levels of whitefly on the eggplant should be vacuumed off, taking care to freeze the vacuum bag to kill the whitefly. A daily vacuuming of the eggplant can strip a significant number of whitefly adults out of the crop. *Orius insidiosus*, *Delphastus*, and *Encarsia* should be introduced to the eggplant as it will become a nursery for the beneficials. The presence of thrips predators in the crop will also help with whitefly control, as they will feed on whitefly eggs and larvae. *Aphidoletes aphidimyza* also feeds on whitefly larvae when they are starving for aphids. See below: Whitefly Strategy Overview.

Watch for aphids entering the house. Rates of the preventative release are 3,000 *Aphidoletes* per 2.5 acres per week. Hot spots should be directly attacked with additional releases of adult *Aphidoletes*; but control of the melon aphid will only occur by prevention, as it reproduces and disperses faster than the biocontrols can handle. For major infestations, rates of 6,000 per 2.5 acres per week should be neutrally released until the numbers are back in manageable levels. In order to achieve quick recovery, the ratio of *Aphidoletes* to aphids must be in the order of 1 to 100. This could require extremely large numbers of *Aphidoletes* for a

quick cure or a longer time frame for recovery. All species of aphids are controlled by *Aphidoletes*. *Aphidius matricariae* will easily control and cycle with green peach aphid. See Below: Aphid Strategy Overview.

### MAIN SEASON

Spider mites should be surrounded by persimilis. The treated area should be the hot spot as well as two more unaffected plants, as the spider mites are probably on these unaffected plants. The persimilis should be placed low on the treated plants as they instinctively move upwards. A ratio of 1 persimilis to 100 spider mites will achieve control in 2 weeks. A typical attack on a single plant hot spot would be 1,000 persimilis on the affected plant, 500 persimilis on the immediate adjacent plants, and 200 persimilis on all of the plants within the treatment circle. The hot spot should be flagged and traffic should be diverted. As the humidity drops in the house, the volunteering *Feltiella* will disappear. Hot spots will flare up more frequently due to the decline in the flying predators. *Stethorus* should be released at a rate of 500 per 2.5 acres every 2 weeks. The *Stethorus* are not intimidated by low humidity and high temperature, and will easily be seen feeding on the dome of the plants. See below: Spider Mite Strategy Overview.

Whitefly should be under control based on the preventative releases. Any weekly count of over 2 whiteflies per card should immediately be responded to by doubling the rate of *Encarsia*. *Delphastus* will remove a very large number of whitefly eggs and can be used to reduce outbreaks. If *Bemisia* are present, *Delphastus* should be released every 2 weeks at a rate of 1,000 to 10,000 per 2.5 acres, depending on level of infestation. In extremely hot situations (over 86° F), whitefly adults will only live for a few days (instead of months) and will not lay eggs. See below: Whitefly Strategy Overview.

Aphid control should shift entirely to *Aphidoletes*, as *Aphidius* will now be infested with hyperparasites. Any aphid banking system should be converted to *Aphidoletes* by introducing it directly onto the bankers. Please note that we do not recommend any aphid banking system. See below: Aphid Strategy Overview.

### LATE SEASON

This is the most important time of the year for spider mites. What you do at this time will determine how bad



the next year will be. Every effort should be made to eliminate all of the spider mites before the beginning of September. Once the day-length begins to noticeably decrease and the evening temperatures drop, the spider mites begin diapausing. In a diapause state, spider mites are more resistant to chemicals and are not as attractive to the beneficials. If chemicals should be used, it would be at this time. Hopefully the whitefly is under control so a spray of Avid will not cause a whitefly outbreak.

If the whitefly is not in good control, it will begin to run away in the fall. Adding trap eggplants will help if the plants are vacuumed daily. Adding *Encarsia* beyond 6 per 10 square feet will have very little effect, as there are just too many whiteflies and the stickiness of the honeydew will begin to impair the movement of all of the parasitoids. *Delphastus* will continue to work at very high whitefly densities, but their impact will not be quickly seen as they will graze on the eggs and the adult whitefly will live on for months.

Aphids must be in good control going into the fall as the *Aphidoletes* will stop cycling due to diapause. Preventative releases will still work, as they are not being asked to cycle. *Aphidius* can work very well in the fall, especially if they were not used in the summer, reducing the pressure of the hyperparasites.

### SPIDER MITE STRATEGY OVERVIEW

Cleanup is essential. Physical spraying, chemical spraying, and *Stratiolaelaps* will all have extremely high returns on investment. Cleanup must occur before the fall weather becomes apparent. Once spider mites begin developing the “red phase”, they will become unattractive to the predatory mites and more resistant to the chemical sprays.

Frequent animal traffic assists in the dispersal of spider mites. Whenever possible, have the staff avoid the known hot spots until the end of a shift. The coveralls of every worker should be washed or frozen every night in order to minimize dispersal of the spider mites.

Fans should be carefully directed so that they achieve the desired effect but don't blow directly onto the plants. Increased air movement lowers the humidity at the leaf surface, chasing away the predators. The result is that the spider mites will enjoy a predator free area that will lead to plant death and an out of control hot spot.

*Persimilis* is still the main beneficial insect. The predators that come on bean leaves will work about twice as fast and with half the inoculums compared to the product in a granular carrier. During hot weather, the *Persimilis* will avoid the exposed tops of the plants in order to prevent themselves from drying out. *Stethorus* will quickly move into the exposed tops of the plants and feed on a tremendous number of spider mites, but must be applied before the plants are damaged. The damage is permanent and will reduce the humidity so that the *Persimilis* will still avoid the area after it has moved down into the canopy. Therefore, prevention and preventative control is the key to spider mite management.

### WHITEFLY STRATEGY OVERVIEW

Whitefly is an insidious pest. Low numbers can give the grower a false sense of security. The longevity and fecundity of the whitefly can lead to overwhelming situations very quickly. The only sure way to control whitefly is to start clean and prevent any significant buildup.

Weekly releases of preventative *Encarsia* must be considered similar to an insurance policy. *Encarsia* will reduce the weekly cost by allowing you to use very low rates (as low as 0.25 per 10 square feet). Our fresh *Encarsia* live longer, fly farther, and are actually smarter than refrigerated *Encarsia*. All of Applied Bio-nomics' *Encarsia* are held above 52° F, and are never refrigerated. *Encarsia* is guaranteed to be no older than 48 hours from harvest.

Using eggplant as a trap/banker can be very effective, although in our experience, *Encarsia* and starting clean will be all you need. Whitefly has a very advanced sense of smell and will move onto the eggplant in a very profound way.

If *Bemisia* have established, parasitoids are at a disadvantage because they are all reared on greenhouse whitefly and always work best on their established host. All parasitoids will adapt to *Bemisia* and will all host feed aggressively. The use of *Delphastus* will have a major impact on *Bemisia*, and if started early, will eliminate the *Bemisia* before they move on to the greenhouse whitefly. *Bemisia* are much harder to monitor because they don't evenly distribute themselves the way greenhouse whitefly does.



## THRIPS STRATEGY OVERVIEW

Prevention of thrips is impossible. They can penetrate any screen and will always get in. Monitoring is essential to determine when they first arrive. Yellow or blue sticky traps are preferable over waiting to see damage on the crop. Once thrips arrive, your response must be immediate and overwhelming. Cucumeris should be applied at a rate of at least 10 mites per plant. They can be shaken out onto the crop from the bulk tube, scattered over the crop by using a hand spreader, puffed out over the crop by pouring the bulk product into a rose duster (the bran will stay behind) or blasted over the crop using a modified and governed Echo backpack leaf blower. The cucumeris, however, can only feed on the early instar thrips. The eggs of the thrips are injected into the plant tissue, making them unavailable to predators. For many thrips, pupation is away from the plant, further impairing the predators' ability to gain the upper hand. Adult thrips are rapid movers and capable of flight. Therefore, cucumeris needs help. Stratiolaelaps at the pupating site will help prevent the thrips from successfully cycling in the house. Orius are aggressive predators and will feed on all mobile stages of thrips as well as loopers, aphids, and whitefly; but are expensive and will leave the house if conditions are not to their liking.

Major inflows of thrips occur when they are disturbed from their outside habitat. Develop a communication with local farmers so that you are aware when they are about to harvest or mow their crop of alfalfa or hay. Unfortunately, they usually only mow on a sunny day, which means the wind will be up and the vents will be open; but reducing the opening gap and duration can have a significant reduction in the number of thrips that will move into the house.

The use of blue sticky cards helps track the arrival of thrips because only thrips like blue to a significant level. The incorporation of vanilla to the traps will increase the trapping of the adults and can have a control effect.

Plants such as fennel will give the thrips a sweeter alternative than your crop and will concentrate the Orius with the thrips. The fennel will also attract local Orius species from outside into the house.

## APHID STRATEGY OVERVIEW

In recent years, the range and species of pest aphids has dramatically increased. Regular, low releases of Aphidoletes will prevent the establishment of all species of aphids. A rate of 3,000 per 2.5 acres per week will protect most crops from aphids. Aphid hot spots must also be treated by direct release of Aphidoletes. Aphidius will leave "mummies" behind, but are also very effective in maintaining control.

Some crops, like ornamental pepper, are extremely attractive to aphids and should be monitored much more closely and maintained with at least double the regular rate of release of Aphidoletes (if any aphids are present).

Regular releases of ladybugs will also help during high levels of infestation. While ladybugs are poor at elimination of aphids, they will reduce the pest pressure significantly.

