



## PEST OF THE MONTH

December

### Thrips

Thrips are such small pests that often the damage that they do is easier to identify than the thrips themselves. Leaves that are infested with thrips will appear brown or slightly mottled silver and leaves will become dry rather than wilted. It looks very much like plant tissue is scraped away leaving a “see-through” window in the leaves. Even only a few thrips can cause considerable damage. Thrips can do a lot of damage to vegetation crops because they can also carry and transmit several plant viruses.

Thrips are very small, only about 1 mm long, and grayish or yellow to brown in color. Adults are long skinny flying insects, brown in color. Larvae are usually yellowish or white. They look similar to small worms that have front legs.

**Cucumeris** is an even smaller, transparent pale brown predatory mite which feeds on young thrips larvae. Cucumeris prefer high humidity in order to reproduce which is very important in thrips infestation since cucumeris have longevity of only 3 weeks. It only takes a few days after the introduction to find cucumeris of all life stages on the plants. Cucumeris are sold in a bran mixture which can be sprinkled in heaps on the plants and soil. Cucumeris only feed on young thrips that are just hatching from plant tissue. Using a variety of biocontrol agents to attack both adults and pupae in soil will give the best long term control.

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