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Volume 14 Number 32 August 2025

## Lace Bugs on Asteraceae

*Though uncommonly encountered in greenhouse settings, growers with containerized native plants in the Asteraceae family might encounter an influx of Chrysanthemum lace bugs and the damage they cause.*

Lace bugs can be found on deciduous woody trees and shrubs across the United States. A lace bug's common name often corresponds to the plant it is found on, such as the Buckeye lace bug, Sycamore lace bug, Oak lace bug, etc., making them relatively easy to identify.

The Chrysanthemum lace bug, *Corythucha marmorata*, is an insect that prefers to feed on plants in the Aster family, including many native perennial species that are increasingly grown in the horticulture trade as pollinator plants. These include various species and cultivars of *Chrysanthemum*, *Helianthus*, *Rudbeckia*, *Solidago*, and *Symphotrichum* (formerly known as *Aster*).



The Chrysanthemum lace bug is a pest of herbaceous perennials in the Aster Family. Image by Beth Scheckelhoff.

The Chrysanthemum lace bug is an interesting insect. While most species of lace bugs can be found on the underside of leaves, Chrysanthemum lace bugs can be found on both the lower and upper leaf surfaces. Lace bugs use a piercing sucking mouthpart to remove the contents of plant cells, leaving behind tiny, yellow stipples. At first glance, the damage appears similar to that of spider mites, minus the webbing. As lace bug populations increase on herbaceous plants during the growing season, so does the severity of damage. Yellow

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stippling becomes bleached in appearance, then browns, and is followed by plant dieback. Damage progresses from the base of the plant upward. If left untreated, lace bugs will become a perennial problem for infested perennials.

**Lace Bug Lifecycle.** Lace bugs overwinter as adults in the soil and around the base of plants. In the late spring to early summer, adults begin feeding on newly emerged lower leaves. Females lay tiny brown eggs on the underside of the leaf, often along the midrib. Once hatched, nymphs feed on the lower leaf surface as they go through five molts before reaching adulthood. There can be more than one generation per year.

**Pest Management.** Generally, lace bug management is not necessary. Natural enemies such as ladybugs, lacewings, minute pirate bugs, spiders, plant bugs, and assassin bugs all help to keep lace bug populations in check. However, large populations can cause herbaceous plants to become unsightly, and in extreme cases, may lead to plant death. This can be exacerbated by prolonged hot, dry conditions that leave plants stressed.

The first approach to actively manage Chrysanthemum lace bugs is to spray nymphs and adults with heavy streams of water. Direct the water stream to the upper and underside of leaves. Insecticidal soaps and horticultural oils that control insects through direct contact can also be applied. These are generally safer for natural enemies and beneficial insects. Be aware that these methods will not impact eggs, only the nymphs and adults, and will likely need to be repeated for effective control.

Systemic insecticides can be used when the above methods fail to provide the desired control. Systemic insecticides effective against lace bugs include flupyradifurone and neonicotinoids such as dinotefuran and imidacloprid. Always read and follow all pesticide label guidelines.



Chrysanthemum lace bug eggs are often laid on the lower leaf along the midrib. Image by Beth Scheckelhoff.



Chrysanthemum lace bug adults, nymphs, eggs, and frass on the underside of tall coneflower (*Rudbeckia laciniata*) leaves. Image by Beth Scheckelhoff.



Adult Chrysanthemum lace bugs cause extensive stippling on New England Aster (*Symphotrichum novae-angliae*) plants. Image by Beth Scheckelhoff.

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