

Common Pests on Homegrown Cannabis

Cannabis plants are susceptible to many pests including insects, mites, fungi and bacteria. This document provides suggestions to address potential pest problems which may occur when growing cannabis indoors at home, including:

1. correct identification of pests;
2. key prevention strategies to avoid pest outbreaks, and
3. nonchemical control options that may be implemented.

Useful monitoring tools

- A hand lens, also called a loupe, is a type of magnifying lens that can help you to see small insects or mites.
- Yellow sticky traps attract flying insects. They are used to save time monitoring. They can give you an indication of the pests that may be present on a plant more quickly compared to checking the whole plant. They can also be used for mass trapping.



Pest	What it looks like	Reason for concern	Monitoring	Prevention	Management
<p><i>Aphids</i></p>  <p><i>W. Cranshaw, CSU, Bugwood.org</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many colours • Soft bodied • 14 mm long • Long antenna • Have 2 tubelike structures called cornicles protruding from the rear • can have wings  <p><i>C. Olsen, USDA APHIS PPQ, Bugwood.org</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weakens plant by sucking on leaves • Deposits sticky honeydew on the leaves while feeding • Honeydew can lead to sooty mold disease on the plant. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check upper and lower leaf surfaces to visually inspect for aphids or aphid skins. • Monitor for winged aphids with yellow sticky traps. • Look for twisted, curled, stunted or yellow leaves.  <p><i>W. Cranshaw, CSU, Bugwood.org</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not over apply fertilizers that promote flushes of vegetative growth. This new growth is attractive to aphids. • Aphids are common pests on many plant species, so take care to prevent spread from other house and garden plants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prune out infested plant parts. • Manually kill (squish) the aphids if there are not many present. • Biological controls are available. <p>Biological Controls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are enemies of pests • Include beneficial insects and mites • Many of these natural enemies are available commercially.



Homegrown Cannabis

Common Pests, *continued*

Integrated Pest Management Program

Pest	What it looks like	Reason for concern	Monitoring	Prevention	Management
<p><i>Thrips</i></p>  <p><i>Alton N. Sparks Jr., UOG, Bugwood.org</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Slender bodied Around 12 mm long Range in colour from translucent/yellowbrown/black 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feeding causes leaf distortion and silvering and weakens the plant. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look for leaf speckling with black flecks and leaf silvering. Monitor for adults with yellow sticky traps. Tap plants to dislodge thrips onto a white piece of paper and use hand lens to confirm. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not reuse potting mix between crops. Many thrips species pupate in the soil. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adults can be mass trapped with yellow sticky traps. Biological controls are available.
<p><i>Two Spotted Spider Mites</i></p>  <p><i>Mario Lanthier, CropHealth Advising & Research</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cream-yellow oval body with 2 dark spots on either side of their abdomen 0.4–0.8 mm 8 legs  <p><i>Mario Lanthier, CropHealth Advising & Research</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feeding damage weakens plants Webbing and mites can contaminate the final product. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look for speckling, yellowing or bronzing on the leaf surface. Use a hand lens to look on underside of leaves for spider mites. Watch for webbing on plant.  <p><i>Mario Lanthier, CropHealth Advising & Research</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two spotted spider mites love hot, dry and dusty conditions. Provide adequate water and nutrients in order to avoid stressing the plants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove leaves with spider mites. Vacuum areas with high webbing. Biological controls available.
<p><i>Powdery Mildew (fungal)</i></p>  <p><i>Zamir Punja</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> White spots and/or thin white dusty covering on leaf and plant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Competes for nutrients, stunts plant Results in decreased quality of final product 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look for white powder forming in small areas on plants.  <p><i>Zamir Punja</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Choose varieties that are less susceptible to powdery mildew. Space and prune plants to promote air circulation and light penetration. Avoid over fertilization. New growth is more susceptible to infection. Avoid temperature swings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prune out impacted parts of the plant.



Homegrown Cannabis

Common Pests, *continued*

Integrated Pest Management Program

Pest	What it looks like	Reason for concern	Monitoring	Prevention	Management
<p><i>Botrytis</i> (fungal)</p>  <p>Mario Lanthier, CropHealth Advising & Research</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Buds turn brown Presence of fuzzy, grey moldy growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can lead to plant death and unusable products 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Watch for water soaked brown spots on the leaves. Watch for browning of the buds. Watch for grey growth on buds and leaves. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Choose varieties that have a loose bud structure. Avoid overhead watering, especially when the plant is flowering. Space and prune plants to ensure light penetration and air circulation. Remove injured or dying parts of the plant as these are susceptible to infection. Sterilize tools, pots, trays, pruners, and growing shelves between use and crop cycles. Avoid high humidity levels. Use a dehumidifier if necessary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prune out impacted parts of the plant.
<p>Root aphids</p>  <p>Kelly Vance</p>  <p>Kelly Vance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dark green with red/brown colourations on the abdomen 1.6–2.2 mm long Similar appearance to leaf aphids Can have wings or no wings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feeds on roots Weakens plants Inhibits water and nutrient uptake 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very high populations can be noticed at times on soil surfaces or in irrigation trays. If you suspect you have root aphids, roots will need to be examined by taking the plant out of the pot. Look for winged aphids on traps or leaves and on sticky cards.  <p>Kelly Vance</p>  <p>W. Cranshaw, CSU, Bugwood.org</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grow plants from seed to avoid the spread of this pest. Use sterilized potting mix. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The best strategy for control of this pest is prevention.



Homegrown Cannabis

Common Pests, *continued*

Integrated Pest Management Program

Pest	What it looks like	Reason for concern	Monitoring	Prevention	Management
<p><i>Fungus gnats</i></p>  <p><small>W. Cranshaw, CSU, Bugwood.org</small></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adults resemble mosquitoes with gangly legs. Larvae are clear maggots with dark heads.  <p><small>W. Cranshaw, CSU, Bugwood.org</small></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Larvae can damage the roots of young plants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor adults with yellow sticky cards. You can monitor for larvae by placing a raw potato wedge in the soil for 24 hrs, then pulling the potato to look for larvae. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not over water and provide good drainage. Good water management is important for the prevention of this pest. Make sure to use sterilized soil mixes. Do not reuse potting mix between crops. Use aged compost because the incorporation of new, uncured compost into any potting mix can increase the occurrence of fungus gnats. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adults can be mass trapped with yellow sticky traps. Biological controls are available.



Please email the Integrated Pest Management Program at bc_ipm@gov.bc.ca for any questions about pest control on homegrown cannabis.