

Citrus Leafminer



The Citrus Leafminer is a small moth species that can damage citrus trees. Citrus leafminer larvae feed by creating shallow tunnels, referred to as mines, in young leaves. The larvae mine the lower or upper surface of the leaves causing them to curl and look distorted. Mature citrus trees generally tolerate leaf damage without any effect on tree growth or fruit yield. Even when infestations of citrus leafminer are heavy on young trees, trees are unlikely to die.



Moths are most active from dusk to early morning and spend the day resting on the undersides of leaves, but are rarely observed. Females lay eggs singly on the underside of leaves. New growth, particularly along the mid-vein, are preferred egg laying sites. In general, citrus leafminer is active from mid-summer through fall and early winter.



Citrus leafminer moths are attracted to new growth of citrus trees. Avoid pruning live branches more than once a year, so that the cycles of growth are uniform and short. Once the leaves harden, the pest will not be able to mine the leaves. Do not prune off leaves damaged by citrus leafminer because undamaged areas of the leaves continue to produce food for the tree. Do not apply nitrogen fertilizer at times of the year when leafminer populations are high and new growth will be severely damaged. Water sprouts often develop on branches and above the graft union on the trunk of mature trees. These shoots grow rapidly and produce new leaves for a prolonged period of time. Remove water sprouts as they act as a site for the moths to lay eggs.



The Monterey Citrus Leafminer Lure and Trap is a useful tool for determining when moths are flying and depositing eggs. Hang the trap inside a citrus tree at about chest height. Citrus leafminer moths may be captured in traps almost any time during the growing season, however, they are most abundant when citrus is putting out new growth in the summer and fall months. These traps will help you determine when to time insecticide applications if they are needed. Bonide All Seasons Oil can be sprayed to smother eggs on new growth. Spinosad or Bonide Captain Jack's Dead Bug spray, an organic insecticide, is sublaminate (it can travel below the waxy outer cuticle of the leaf) so is effective in controlling larvae in the mines.

Information and photos courtesy of UC IPM University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources

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