

Blister Mites

Scientific Name: *Phytoptus* spp.

Hosts: Apple, crabapple, pear

Damage/symptoms: Eriophyid mite feeding creates a “blister” on the leaf surface, and the mites reside within this protected area.

Life cycle:

The mites overwinter as adults beneath bud scales. When the buds start to grow in the spring, mites attack the emerging leaves. Their activity increases in the summer with two-three generations per year.

Management:

The mites normally do not affect the health of the tree. If it is just a small portion of damaged leaves, prune and dispose of them. Eriophyid mites are also controlled naturally by predatory mites, predatory thrips, and minute pirate bugs later in the summer.

Chemical:

- Once visible galls are formed, it is difficult to effectively treat blister mites.
- A dormant oil can be applied prior to bud break.
- Neem oil, insecticidal soap, and sulfur are reduced-risk chemical options and can be applied following bud break and during the summer.
- Miticides and insecticides with the active ingredients abamectin, bifenthrin, carbaryl, deltamethrin, malathion, permethrin, and imidacloprid are broad-spectrum insecticides that can be used as a last resort for heavy infestations but are generally not recommended (they often kill beneficial insects and predators of mites, which can increase populations of the blister mites).
- Make sure to follow the label (especially temperature restrictions for applying horticultural or neem oil).



Fig. 1. Blister-like galls from blister mites. Photo by Laurie Kerzicnik



Figure 2. Blister-like galls on the underside of an apple leaf. Photo by W. Cranshaw, Bugwood.org

By Laurie Kerzicnik lauren.kerzicnik@montana.edu