

A LETTER TO ORNAMENTALS GROWERS FROM THE AD HOC WHITEFLY TASK FORCE

We sent out a similar correspondence to this back in 2007, and it is again necessary to contact you. 2016 will be another possibly even more challenging year for whitefly management. Q-biotype whiteflies have been detected in urban landscapes from the Florida Keys through Palm Beach County, Florida.

The Ad Hoc Whitefly Task Force, made up of state and federal regulators, representatives of the ornamentals, cotton and vegetable industries, and leading scientists, has been working together to develop effective whitefly management programs since 2005. The success of this effort has serious economic implications for U.S. agriculture, and depends in part on you, the ornamentals grower.

A good whitefly management program must have two goals. First is to help growers produce a high quality, salable crop for the final consumer. Secondly, but equally critical is preservation of the chemical tools that agriculture uses to manage whiteflies. If we do not maintain the viability of effective insecticide tools, it will be difficult for many growers to produce salable crops. Consequently, the wise use of chemicals, through a scientifically based IPM program, is essential in today's global setting. Europe has seen, and long has been suffering from the results of over-spraying. Insecticide misuse in the United States could potentially result in silverleaf whitefly populations that cannot be controlled. It is important to remember that the Q-biotype whitefly is already resistant to a number of products commonly used. We are concerned that insecticide overuse may already be leading to B-biotype resistance.

The Task Force asks you to collaborate with us in this effort. It is not just about the challenges posed by the Q-biotype. It is about avoiding resistance development in any whitefly population.

What should commercial growers be doing?

- 1. Scout** – this is essential. Inspect your crops at least weekly to find infestations early. Do not let the whiteflies get ahead of you, or your treatment options will be more limited and expensive.
- 2. Exclude or isolate**. If reasonably possible, try to exclude whiteflies from your growing structures with screening material, and if possible, isolate the facility so that workers have to enter through an anteroom.
- 3. Practice good sanitation** – this is also essential. Keep weeds controlled because they serve as an alternate host for the whiteflies, and maintain other good growing practices.

4. Inspect incoming shipments, and isolate if necessary. All of the major propagators cooperated in this program, so you should not be receiving undue numbers of whiteflies on your planting material. Zero-tolerance is NOT a reasonable goal and you may see a whitefly or two when shipments arrive. That is ok, and means that your propagator (or rooting station) is probably following good management practices. However, if you see many whiteflies on incoming shipments, keep those shipments separate from your other crops until they have been treated and the whitefly cleaned up. Do not forget then to contact your propagator or rooting station to inform them about the situation. Ask whether they are biotyping their whiteflies, if they are monitoring resistance levels in their whitefly populations, and if they are following the Task Force's recommended Management Program.

5. Watch your neighbors' fields. If you're near cotton or vegetable fields, you may see whiteflies migrate to your greenhouse at the end of their season, and you will then have to deal with them. If you know when those harvesting operations occur, you are better able to prepare.

6. Study and implement the "Management Program for Whiteflies on Propagated Ornamentals" recommended by the Whitefly Task Force. It is available at http://mrec.ifas.ufl.edu/lso/bemisia/DOCUMENTS/WhiteflyManagementProgram_1-15-15.pdf. This program is based on the best and most current scientific data developed by the Whitefly Task Force scientists. Do not rely on just one or two effective products, but instead integrate products with different modes of action to decrease the potential for developing resistance. Rotate chemical classes after each life cycle length for that time of year (time from egg to adult).

7. If you have control problems: contact your propagator and your local extension agent or university expert. Follow our "Whitefly Management Program", and get your whiteflies biotyped. The biotyping process is fast, and your specific information will be kept confidential. Knowing which biotype you are dealing with will help you choose the most effective control products. (The Management Plan provides a list of addresses where samples may be sent for biotyping.)

In the United States the potentially impacted industries, federal and state governments, and scientists have cooperated in an aggressive, cooperative whitefly management effort to help growers produce a salable crop and minimize the likelihood of developing resistant whiteflies. You are an essential part of that effort.

REMEMBER: Q-BIOTYPE WHITEFLIES ARE A DOCUMENTED THREAT, BUT THERE IS ALSO EVIDENCE THAT B-BIOTYPE ARE DEVELOPING RESISTANCE. Only by working cooperatively, wisely, and together can agriculture and ornamental growers solve this problem.

PLEASE BE PART OF THE SOLUTION, NOT THE PROBLEM!
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