



# CHRISTENSEN'S PLANT CENTER

## Wholesale Supplier To Landscape Professionals

I have white cotton on the underside of my Tricolor leaves, what is it?

This is a concern of many of our customers every year, what you are seeing is *Phyllaphis fagi*. Also known as Woolly Aphids, very common on Beech trees and many other plants. Because of the dark leaf of the Beech it is very noticeable and of great concern to the average consumer. As I mentioned earlier we get this question asked every year.



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Woolly Aphid are what I call a nuisance pest not a dangerous pest. Although they do attack the leaves and twigs of the plants and even the roots sometimes, the damage is more of an aesthetic problem.

We do our best to keep all our plants free of insects and diseases, but quite frankly there are just too many insects and if we sprayed for everything we would only be harming the environment and many other beneficial insects. So we have to consider the severity of the pest. When we do spray, we use the lowest toxicity level we can use to control as much as we can.

The Aphid damage is not serious to the overall health of the tree and is usually late into the season when you notice the insects and maybe some curled leaves. You might also see the blackening of branches from the sooty mold which is from the excrement or honey dew (sounds like the list my wife always has for me) of the insect. The number of the insects is usually kept in check by other natural predators like Lacewings, Ladybugs and Parasitic wasps. All of which you might be killing when spraying for the control of the Aphids. Therefore control is not usually required. If desired, you can spot treat with an insecticidal soap or neem oil (very safe).

I have been taught that spraying chemicals is the last resort. Be sure what you are spraying for and is it even the right time, it may be too late.

**SAVE THE LADYBUGS!**

