

ERIOPHYID MITE ON AZALEA

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For several years, a spotty, gradual, sometimes nearly lethal decline affected an azalea crop in Connecticut. Young leaves were russetted, sometimes becoming tan and dying back from the tips. Terminal growth sometimes died back completely. Pathologists looked for leaf and root disease. Physiologists analyzed the soil and set up nutrition experiments since the symptoms were similar to some trace element deficiencies (figure 1). No insects were found.



Figure 1. Abnormal terminal growth on azalea caused by Eriophyid mites.

The grower mentioned this to an out-of-state friend who had a suggestion; look for Eriophyid mites.

We looked. They were there. These tiny mites are related to those that cause russetting on citrus and were causing the damage on the young leaves (figure 2). They were not numerous and not ordinarily visible to the naked eye.

After Kelthane provided control, the azaleas recommenced normal growth.

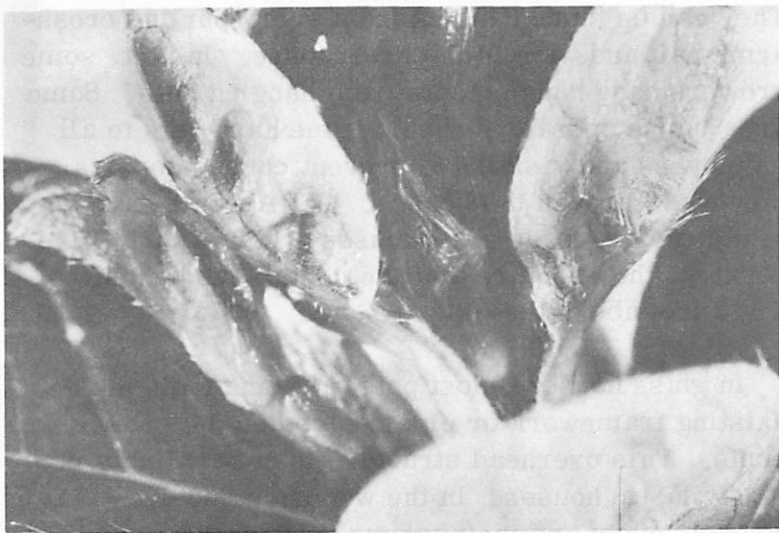


Figure 2. Tan abraded areas on azalea leaves resulting from Eriophyid mite feeding.