

## Winter & Early Spring Thrips Management Keeps Populations Low

*Whitmire Micro-Gen Research Laboratories, Inc.*

**T**hrips are becoming an increasingly difficult and troublesome pest in greenhouses throughout the United States. Thrips have a wide host range. More plant material is moved between greenhouses, with the potential to transport thrips. Insecticide strategies for other pests, for example white flies, scale and aphids, are not controlling thrips as secondary targets. Surviving thrips can persist in low numbers during periods of cool weather, even in empty greenhouses. These low numbers are difficult to detect and can explode as temperatures rise.

### Why a Cool Season Management Program Is Important

Once established in a greenhouse, thrips are almost impossible to totally eliminate, i.e., they are endemic. Given the proper conditions, endemic pests can build to damaging numbers quickly. Continuing to manage thrips during the cool part of the year is mandatory as major problems are to be avoided in the spring.

During the winter and early spring (cool season), it may appear that thrips problems are sharply reduced or eliminated. This is because it takes thrips much longer to mature from egg to adult during this time, and egg-laying per female is also reduced so counts are low. It is the tendency of growers to dramatically lessen their thrips control efforts when they see fewer thrips on sticky cards and no damage on plants. But this practice may lead to slowly building populations that will explode when average temperatures rise.

### How to Develop a Cool Season Thrips Management Program

Intensifying your scouting programs can help develop your own cool season management program. Thrips tend to occur unevenly in the greenhouse in the winter. Do not rely on average monitoring card counts to indicate treatment; you may be missing "hot spots" of high populations.

The secret to practicing population management in the cool season is to treat with an effective insect growth regulator once every 7 to 14 days. You will also benefit by constantly searching for hot spots and treating with a good residual wet spray as needed.

### Three Steps to a Cool Season Thrips Management Program

- 1 KEEP POPULATIONS LOW** with PT® 2100 Preclude® Insect Growth Regulator total release aerosol treatments every 7 to 14 days throughout the greenhouse. Preclude's advantages include:
  - Goes on dry, so it doesn't add unwanted moisture in cool periods.
  - Highly effective against strains of Western Flower Thrips resistant to other pesticides.
  - Safe on flowers, even with repeated applications.
  - Gives good REI management. The 12-hour REI clock begins just 15 minutes after the last canister is triggered.
  - Photostability provides longer residual effect.
- 2 CHECK FOR POPULATION HOT SPOTS** regularly using PT® 23 blue or PT® 24 yellow monitoring cards and by visual inspection of known preferred hosts and yellow flowering plants.
- 3 TREAT HOT SPOTS AS NEEDED** with microencapsulated DuraGuard.™ DuraGuard advantages include:
  - Highly effective against both thrips adults and larvae.
  - Timed release formulation provides longer residual control.
  - Proven safe on most open blooms.
  - User friendly "caution" label, 12-hour REI and low odor.
  - Cost effective; low use rate.

**Bottom line:** The best way to avoid thrips problems is to regularly use an effective IGR in cool seasons. Total release Preclude® IGR makes this easy to do.

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