



Topic: Black Sooty Mold on Ixoras

Question: I have ixoras on the north side of my house and they have a black sooty mess on them. What should I spray them with to get this off? Any help will be appreciated.
Kay, email

Answer: The black mess is a fungus called sooty mold. It is due to the feeding of sap sucking insects such as scales, mealybugs and aphids. They prefer the shady north side of the house. They feed on the leaves and stems by sucking the sugary sap from the plant. After feeding, the insects excrete their waste that drips down onto parts of the plants. The excreted product is packed with sugar and is thus called honeydew. The fungus, always around, feeds on the honeydew and can cover most of the affected plant with this black mess. The insects may have stopped feeding by now. Carefully examine the stems and the underside of the leaves for small insects. Scale insects will not be dislodged even when dead; mealybugs are usually very white in color and aphids are often green and pear-shaped. If the insects are alive, you can apply an insecticide for control. Insecticide products range from insecticidal oils to more toxic remedies. Products containing Imidacloprid will give long lasting control. The black sooty mold can often be washed away by using a light insecticidal oil. Most often, however, unaffected new leaves replace the sooty mold affected leaves. Rain and irrigation water will eventually erode the sooty mold. However, the insects must be controlled or the problem will likely persist.



Stephen Brown is a horticulture agent with the Lee County Extension Service. Submit questions by calling the horticulture desk at 533-7504 between 9 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. or by e-mailing brownsh@leegov.com. Visit his Web page at <http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/hort/GardenHome.shtml>. For native plants click on Publications A-Z.

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) is an Equal Opportunity Institution authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function with non-discrimination with respect to race, religion, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin, political opinions or affiliations. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension Service, University of Florida, IFAS, Florida A. & M. 02/04/2012.