

Eriophyid Mites on Trees

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Eriophyid mite damage on blackgum. Photo: Lorraine Graney, Bartlett Tree Experts, Bugwood.org

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Key points

- Adult eriophyid mites are very small (<1mm). A hand lens is needed to see them.
- They are spindle-shaped, with four legs and may be white, yellow or orange.
- There are several generations a year.

- They overwinter in bark crevices and under bud scales.
- Some species feed on the leaf surfaces of both deciduous and needled evergreen trees causing the foliage to turn olive-tan.
- Others cause **leaf galls** (some appear fuzzy) on beech, leaf blisters on pear, or damage buds of yew and flowers of ash.
- Eriophyid mites may cause **witches'-broom** galls in hackberry, Scotch pine, and poplar.
- They are the main vector of **rose rosette disease**.



Eriophyid mites. Photo: John Davidson, University of Maryland



Felt-like leaf gall on river birch caused by an eriophyid mite. Photo: Steven Katovich, Bugwood.org

Management

- To check for eriophyid mites, look for off-color foliage, leaf or bud abnormalities.
- Use a 10X or 20X hand lens.
- Large mite populations often produce many elongate, white shed skins.
- Plants with a history of eriophyid mite damage should receive a dormant oil spray to kill overwintering stages.
- To prevent heavy gall infestations, spray with horticultural oil at bud break (summer rate).
- Leaf feeding mites can be controlled with a spray of horticultural oil (summer rate) whenever they reach damaging levels. Check horticultural labels carefully for instructions and safety precautions.

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