

Back to [Pest Identification and Diagnosis](#)



[Introduction to Aphids](#) [Chrsanthemum Aphid](#) [Green Peach Aphid](#) [Melon or Cotton Aphid](#)

MELON OR COTTON APHID

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Aphis gossypii* Glover

CLASS: Insecta

ORDER: Hemiptera

FAMILY: Aphididae



Aphids and Aphid Mummies

From: [Universit of California](#)



Winged Adult



Winged Adult



Wingless Adult



Nmph

DESCRIPTION

Adults: This is a small aphid, smaller than most other aphids. The winged adults are about 1.25 millimeters long, soft bodied, and ellow to dark green with a black head and thora“. The wings are held rooflike over the abdomen at rest. Wingless adults tend to be 1.0 to 1.5 millimeters long, uniform in color, and ellow to dark green. The antennae and cornicles are shorter than those of winged adults. Cornicles are small, tail-pipe-like structures on the end of the bod. Pale individuals tend to be smaller and to have fewer antennal segments than dark individuals.

Nmphs: Nmphs resemble adult aphids e“cept for sie (about 0.5 to 1.0 millimeter long). Those destined to be winged adults have wing buds in the later instars.

BIOLOGY

Host Plants: Melons and other cucurbits, okra, hops, strawberries, beans, spinach, tomatoes, clover, asparagus, citrus, catalpa, violet, hdrangea, begonia, ground iv, and weeds are some melon aphid hosts. The have been discovered feeding on plants in 25 plant families. The melon aphid is an important pest of cotton and is also called the cotton aphid.

Damage: The melon aphid feeds b piercing the plant surface with its threadlike mouthparts to suck out plant juices. This feeding causes distorted growth, decreased ield, reduced qualit of ield, and premature ripened fruit. The fruit ma be covered b the feeding aphids’ honedew and b cast skins.

The melon aphid transmits several important plant viruses including cucumber mosaic, onion elbow dwarf, citrus quick decline, lil symptomless diseases, and lil rosette.

Life Cycle: The melon aphid is an important pest of both agricultural and ornamental plants. Being practically omnipresent, it feeds upon many host plants. The melon aphid spends the winter on weed hosts and on cold-tolerant plants probably both as nymphs and adult females in the south. During warm periods of winter they start feeding until cold weather inactivates them again. In the spring the adult females move to new hosts and start feeding and rapidly reproducing. In northern climates the aphid overwinters in the egg stage. Indoors and in greenhouses the aphids feed and reproduce throughout the winter. Melon aphids commonly start out on one plant and spread out from that point. On wood ornamentals such as gardenias, feeding is confined to new growth in the spring.

For the melon aphid there are two kinds of hosts, primary and secondary. In late fall, aphids feed upon primary plants and lay overwintering eggs. Melon aphids feeding on secondary plants always give birth to live young. In spring, winged forms usually infest new plants, both primary and secondary, and the females produce live nymphs. Within about a week the new nymphs mature into wingless females that begin to bear young of their own. As the plant becomes crowded, more and more of the offspring develop into winged females which in turn migrate to other plants to begin new infestations. Wingless forms usually predominate in low aphid populations.

MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Biological Control: Natural enemies may control minor infestations on outdoor ornamentals. Spider fly maggots and ladybird beetles and their larvae feed upon melon aphids. Braconid wasps parasitize the aphids, and ants feed on the honeydew excreted by feeding aphids.

Pesticides: Because the winged forms are 2 to 3.7 times more resistant to organophosphate pesticides than are wingless forms, infested plants in the greenhouse should be sprayed thoroughly when aphids are first noticed.

[Introduction to Aphids](#) [Chrysanthemum Aphid](#) [Green Peach Aphid](#) [Melon or Cotton Aphid](#)

Back to [Pest Identification and Diagnosis](#)



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