

## Pest Busters #6 - Mealybugs

Mealybugs are usually found in moist warm environments and can be particularly troublesome for the greenhouse grower, houseplant grower or tropical plant grower. They are white in color, oblong shaped and appear to be hairy. In high numbers, they can look like a fuzzy patch of scale on plant stems. You can view some photos of mealybugs [here](#).

Mealybugs suck the juices from the plant through the stems and can carry fungus and disease. Plants being affected by mealy bugs can look stunted, pale or have leaf drop.

The females feed on stems and plant roots and secrete a white waxy film to help protect them while feeding. Males generally only live long enough to fertilize the female, and therefore do not feed as adults.

The best way to remove mealybugs in small numbers is to scrape them off with your fingernail, or rub a cotton swab on them that has been soaked in rubbing alcohol. In high numbers, mealybugs can be controlled with Diazinon, Acephate or Malathion. But I would try Neem Oil first, before resorting to a chemical control. For small infestations that can not be controlled by hand, a homemade solution of 2 tablespoons liquid soap to 1 gallon of water, sprayed on the bugs every 5-10 days should help. Test the spray on the plant in a small area, before spraying the whole thing.

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