

Magnolia Scale

Neolecanium cornuparvum

Symptoms & Damage

- Heavy white wax coating on branches and twigs
- Sooty mold growth on leaves and stems due to honeydew secretions
- Yellowing leaves and premature leaf drop
- Branch dieback and stunted growth in severe infestations

Cause

- Large soft-bodied scale insects that attach to stems and branches
- Females are typically 1/2 inch in diameter, reddish-brown to purple covered with white waxy coating
- Overwinter as nymphs on branches, mature to adults in late spring/early summer
- High reproduction rate with females laying up to 1,000 eggs

Prevention & Cultural Controls

- Maintain plant vigor through proper watering, mulching, and fertilization
- Avoid excessive nitrogen fertilization which can increase susceptibility
- Encourage beneficial insects like ladybugs and parasitic wasps
- Prune and destroy heavily infested branches when practical

Treatment Options

- **Organic Solutions**
 - Horticultural oil sprays in late winter/early spring before bud break to kill overwintering nymphs
 - Insecticidal soaps applied during crawler stage (late summer/early fall)
- **Chemical Treatments**
 - Systemic insecticides containing imidacloprid or dinotefuran applied as soil drench in late spring
 - Insect growth regulators (pyriproxyfen) during crawler stage
- **Best Time to Treat**
 - Late winter/early spring with dormant oil sprays (before bud break)
 - Late summer when crawlers are active (August-September)

Plant(s) Affected

- Magnolia species (especially star magnolia, saucer magnolia), tulip tree

Additional Notes

- Scales can be scraped off with a soft brush on small infestations
- Multiple year treatment program may be necessary for severe infestations

