

**Species:** *Stephanitis pyrioides*

**Common name:** Lace bug

**Order:** Hemiptera (meaning half wing)

**Sub-or:**

**Origin:** Japan



The most widespread pest issue affecting azaleas and rhododendrons in the world today are the beautiful lace bug. With over 2000 lace bug species only one affects our azaleas and rhododendrons in Australia, *S. pyrioides*. Other troublesome lace bug species though not troublesome yet in Australia are *Stephanitis*

*rhododendron*; and *S. takeyai* affecting plants in mainly in Europe and USA.

Other lace bug species hosted by other plant species will not harm azaleas and rhododendrons.



Damage by thrips, spider mites or other insects can often be mistaken for lace bud damage.

And many mistake lace bugs for lacewings.

Lace bugs are classified as True Bugs, a distinctive order of some 30,000 species embracing the lace bug family. Lace bugs have the common feature of being equipped with mouthparts to suck fluid from plant leaves. They have limited flight ability but can be windblown for kilometres.



Female lace bugs insert their eggs in a sack, upright, internally (not on the leaf surface) into the underside of a leaf along or near the mid vein and covered by hard varnish like substance. A single leaf can house 100 or more eggs.

Chemical treatments have no impact at this stage.

Warm winters mean that adults continue to lay eggs which will hatch as the weather warms. The hatching cycle could be as short as 30 days depending upon the weather. So leaf damage can be noticed quite early in the season.

Both adults and nymphs suck juices from the leaves by injecting fluids into the leaf then sucking out the partly digested cell sap. Leaves quickly lose the ability to function properly and become chlorotic. In a whole plant infestation the plant is weakened and is vulnerable to other stresses from other pests and diseases.

### **Control**

I know that many of us do not want to use a chemical control method but in most cases it is the most effective way of controlling lace bug infestations. Timing is critical, eggs laid in autumn lie dormant over winter and hatch in spring and the new season's nymphs do not emerge all at one time so spraying early will kill only the first lot. So one application of a systemic insecticide containing imidacloprid or acetamiprid in late to mid spring will kill the later emerging nymphs as well as the earlier ones before they reach adulthood. An organic control is horticultural soap.