

Spray can control citrus leaf miners

Once-a-year soil application is touted as safe, effective.

Q. Leaf miners are destroying all the new growth on my citrus. I tried a spray that claims to kill them, but it didn't help. My neighbors have it, too. I even noticed it on plants inside Lowe's.

Is this an epidemic? I keep cutting off the infected

growth, but what will that do to next year's crop?



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A. Although the reader lives in Menifee, this is a problem throughout California's

citrus-growing areas, and most citrus trees have been affected.

The citrus leaf miner is more of a cosmetic problem for adult trees, but in young trees, growth can be reduced. The adult citrus leaf miner is a very tiny moth that lays its eggs on the underside of young citrus leaves.

The eggs hatch after four or five days, and the newly hatched larvae burrow into the leaf and create a tunnel, or mine, as they feed along the leaf. The tunnel becomes more visible as the larva increases in size, and the leaf eventually can become quite distorted.

After about two to seven weeks, the larva pupates within the leaf, and the adult moth emerges, ready to breed and begin a new life cycle.

A few years ago, a new



COURTESY OF OTTILLIA "TOOTS" BIER

Leaf miners are a problem throughout California's citrus-growing areas.

product was registered for use in California to protect citrus trees against both the Asian citrus psyllid and the citrus leaf miner. California is extremely careful in registering pesticides, and as far as I know, this is the only one available to homeowners for use against these pests on fruit-bearing citrus.

The product is produced by Bayer Advanced and is called Fruit, Citrus, and Vegetable Insect Control, and, as the name suggests, it is registered for use on a number of food crops and an extensive list of insect pests. Most nurseries and garden centers are likely to have it in stock.

To protect your trees, mix the product with water and apply the solution, via a watering can or bucket, to the soil under the tree, not to the leaves. The tree's roots take up the insecticide and deliver it throughout the plant, providing complete plant protection. It is safe to harvest and eat your citrus fruit 24 hours after

treatment.

Both the psyllid and the leaf miner are attracted to fresh growth, so it's important to treat your trees before the pests become active in the spring. The best time is late winter, several weeks before the first flush of new growth. Never apply it at or near the time of flowering, as you don't want to risk harming bees. Because this product needs to be applied only once a year, it is a real convenience, but you must read and follow the directions carefully to ensure safe, effective treatment.

Although much of the future damage will be prevented, the damage that already has occurred cannot be reversed. The citrus leaf miner cannot penetrate mature citrus leaves that have hardened off, so old leaves are safe.

You should not prune off the damaged leaves.

Ottillia "Toots" Bier has been a UC Cooperative Extension master gardener since 1980. Send comments and questions to features@pe.com.