

Master Gardener: Treating the citrus leaf miner

10:00 PM PDT on Friday, August 27, 2010

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Q: Several months ago you told us about a product that would protect our citrus trees from leaf miners. At the time my trees looked fine and I didn't pay much attention, but now many of the leaves on my lemon tree have the tunnels you described and are wrinkled. Is it too late to treat my trees and what was the name of the product?

A: The product I wrote about is produced by **Bayer** Advanced and is called Fruit, Citrus, and Vegetable Insect Control. As the name suggests, it is registered for use, not just on citrus trees, but a number of food crops and combats an extensive list of insect pests, including the citrus leaf miner.

Although citrus leaf miner is primarily a cosmetic problem on mature trees, it can seriously impair the growth of young trees. The adult citrus leaf miner is a tiny moth that lays its eggs on the underside of young citrus leaves. After four or five days the eggs hatch, and the newly hatched larvae tunnel through the leaf as they feed.

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Although citrus leaf miner is primarily a cosmetic problem on mature trees, it can seriously impair the growth of young trees.

As they grow, the tunnel becomes larger and more visible and the leaves become twisted and wrinkled. After two to seven weeks, depending upon the weather (the warmer the weather, the faster the life cycle), the larvae pupate within the leaf and the adult moths emerge ready to breed and start a new life cycle.

Because most citrus trees, including lemon trees, have multiple flushes of new growth each year, the adult citrus leaf miners have many opportunities to infest our trees and multiply their numbers.

The best time to apply this product is in the spring, just before the first flush of new growth. Nevertheless, with the hot weather we've been having, most citrus trees will likely have another flush of new growth in a few weeks, and an application now will stop the leaf miners from attacking this new growth. Of course, although future damage will be prevented, the damage that has already occurred cannot be reversed.

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.

To protect your trees, you mix the product with water and simply apply it, via a watering can or bucket, to the soil under the tree. The tree's roots take up the insecticide and deliver it throughout the plant, except for the fruits themselves, providing complete plant protection. It is safe to harvest your citrus fruit 24 hours after treatment.