

Curry Leaf Psylla: A Rising Threat to Curry Leaf Cultivation

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Curry leaf (*Murraya koenigii*) (L.) Spreng. is widely used in Indian cuisine and is cultivated in home gardens, nurseries, and commercial farms. Curry leaves are aromatic leaves, and the curry leaf tree is native to India, which adds a unique, citrusy flavor to dishes like curries, soups, and rice. They are used fresh or dried in cooking and have a variety of medicinal uses, including supporting digestive health, boosting immunity, and promoting heart health. Curry leaves are distinct from curry powder and are a good source of vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. In recent years, a tiny insect called curry leaf psylla (*Diaphorina citri*) has emerged as a major pest, causing significant leaf distortion and reduced plant growth. Understanding this pest is essential for protecting both small garden plants and large plantations.

Curry Leaf Psylla

Curry leaf psylla is a small, sap-sucking insect belonging to the family Psyllidae. It resembles a miniature cicada and is known for its ability to jump quickly when disturbed. The size of the psylla is 2–3 mm. Greenish to yellow insect. Adults hold their wings roof-like over their bodies. Nymphs are flat, yellowish and remain on tender shoots. Although tiny, this pest can cause heavy damage when populations build up.

Life Cycle of Psylla: The complete life cycle of curry leaf psylla takes about 15–20 days, depending on temperature.

Eggs – Laid on tips of tender shoots; Nymphs – Small, yellowish stages that suck sap continuously; Adults – Jumping, active insects that disperse to new shoots. Warm and dry weather favors rapid multiplication, leading to frequent outbreaks.

Symptoms of Curry Leaf Psylla Infestation: Curry leaf psylla primarily attacks tender leaves and newly growing shoots of the curry leaf tree. Upward curling and cupping of leaves, Yellowing and distortion of tender shoots, Stunted plant growth, Presence of honeydew, a sticky substance secreted by nymphs, Development of sooty mould, a black fungal growth on honeydew, Poor leaf quality and reduced aroma. If left unchecked, the plant becomes weak and loses its fresh green appearance. There are major symptoms of psylla. The psylla becomes problematic under Dense, unpruned plants. Excessive application of nitrogen fertilizers, Hot, dry climate, Poor air circulation, and Absence of natural enemies due to heavy pesticide use.

Integrated Management of Curry Leaf Psylla: Regular pruning of infested shoots, Removal of curled leaves, ensuring proper spacing and airflow, avoiding excessive



Nymphs and adults of psylla damaging on curry leaf plant

nitrogen fertilization, and use of yellow sticky traps to monitor adult population. Encouraging natural enemies like Ladybird beetles, Green lacewings (*Chrysoperla spp.*) and Parasitic wasps helps manage psylla naturally. Avoiding harmful pesticides allows these beneficial insects to survive and control psylla populations. We can also use Neem oil 2%, Azadirachtin 1500 ppm at 2 ml/L, Karanj (pongamia) oil 2% to manage nymphal and adult population on curry leaf tree and spray at 7–10-day intervals during active infestation. Mild soap solution (10 ml/L) is used to clean honeydew and sooty mould to enhance the photosynthesis process. Use chemical pesticides like Imidacloprid 17.8 SL @ 0.3 ml/L, Thiamethoxam 25 WG @ 0.25 g/L, and Fipronil 5 SC @ 1 ml/L only when the infestation is severe, and avoid spraying leaves meant for immediate consumption. Do not harvest leaves for 7 days after spraying. Rotate insecticides to avoid resistance. Follow all safety instructions on the label.

Conclusion

Curry leaf psylla may be small, but it can cause considerable damage if not managed in time. Farmers and home gardeners can keep their plants healthy by adopting regular pruning, neem-based sprays, and encouraging beneficial insects. With proper integrated pest management, curry leaf plants can remain lush, aromatic, and productive throughout the year.