

Whitefly

Recognize the problem

Whitefly is the most damaging pest of many vegetable and horticultural crops, including chilli, tomato, papaya and guava. The whitefly is a small white insect, which lives underneath the leaves. If the plant is gently shaken, the whiteflies will fly away and so are easy to see. Too many whiteflies can destroy the total crop. When the whitefly sucks on the plant, it can inject viruses into the plant. Viruses make the plant curl at the shoot tips. Diseased chilli plants have small fruits which ripen unevenly.

Background

Stunted plants are infected with viruses, which can be spread to healthy plants by whiteflies. Rain drowns the whiteflies, so there are more whiteflies in the dry season. Even just five whiteflies per plant during the first few weeks after transplanting will result in stunting. Older plants are more resistant to the disease.

Management

Remove stunted and diseased plants and destroy them outside of the field. Plants must be kept free of whiteflies during the first five weeks of the life of the crop. § Four days after transplanting, soak the soil with an insecticide; Imidacloprid (e.g. Admire) using a knapsack sprayer and at the recommended dose (RD), as written on the label. Usually this controls the pest for two months. § Never spray the chemicals twice, because they stay in the plant for a long time.

If whiteflies return after two months, control them with systemic or contact insecticides; cypermethrin (e.g. Ripcord) / fenvalerate (e.g. Fenfen) at RD mentioned in the label and observe the plants frequently. Note, these chemicals will also have an effect on natural enemies of whiteflies.

Whiteflies live under leaves. (Photo by Bruce Cava (CC BY))



Whiteflies on leaves of Chilli. (Photo by Anwar Hossain)



When using a pesticide, always wear protective clothing and follow the instructions on the product label, such as dosage, timing of application, and pre-harvest interval.

Scientific name(s) > *Bemisia spp.*

The recommendations in this factsheet are relevant to: Bangladesh



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