

THRIPS

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Thrips, *Frankliniella* spp. and others, make use of a broad range of host plants, including nectarine, peach, and plum. Adult thrips are slender, yellow to black insects, less than 1/12 inch (2 mm) long (Figure 1). Adults have four feathery wings and are usually very active. Nymphs are smaller and wingless. Both nymphs and adults feed by rasping or scraping plant tissue with their mouthparts and sucking up plant juices.



Figure 1. Western flower thrips.

Injury to stone fruit, particularly nectarine or plum, occurs when flower thrips feed and lay their eggs in the buds, blossoms, and small fruit in the early spring, causing shallow brown scarring or russetting of fruit surfaces (Figure 2). Peaches are rarely injured by thrips. Russetting is commonly seen on nectarines in the Southeast. On peaches russetting occasionally develops following warm, dry winters that seem to favor high numbers of western flower thrips. Thrips can also cause silvering, a normally superficial injury to nearly mature fruit. Silvering is much more readily seen on highly colored cultivars. Silvering is a light, to colorless, stippling on the fruit surface (Figure 3). Silvering is typically an inconsequential injury that is seldom recognized as insect related. Thrips also feed on peach foliage, but damage is insignificant.

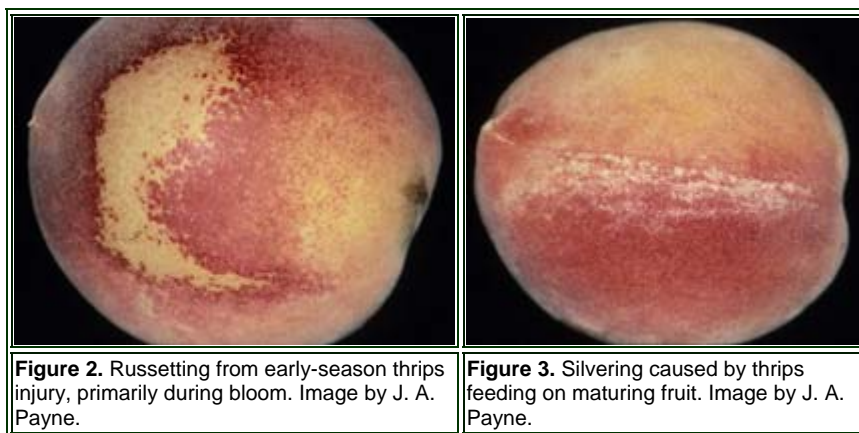


Figure 2. Russetting from early-season thrips injury, primarily during bloom. Image by J. A. Payne.

Figure 3. Silvering caused by thrips feeding on maturing fruit. Image by J. A. Payne.

Thrips deposit their eggs in plant tissue. Young thrips hatch in two or more weeks. They pass through five developmental stages including egg, two active larval stages, an inactive pre-pupal stage, and adult. Developmental time depends upon species and weather. Most species have multiple generations per year. Thrips may invade peaches from nearby crops or the orchard floor cover as these hosts dry down and become unacceptable. Nectarines and some plums are much more susceptible to thrips injury, especially during bloom. Spraying at pink bud and again at petal fall typically controls flower thrips.